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President:	Ms. Migiro/Mr. Mahiga	(United Republic of Tanzania)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mr. Adada
	Denmark	Mr. Jespersen
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Nana Effah-Apenteng
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kawakami
	Peru	Mr. De Rivero
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Mahmoud
	Russian Federation	Mr. Sitnikov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Johnston
	United States of America	Mr. Yamamoto

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region

Letter dated 18 January 2006 from the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/27)

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The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.

The President: I wish to remind all participants of the appeals made to them this morning to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously.

I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Anne Leahy, Ambassador of Canada for the Great Lakes region.

Mrs. Leahy (Canada) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all, on behalf of Canada, to convey our condolences to the Government of Guatemala and to the families of the victims following the deaths on 23 January in the Democratic Republic of Congo of eight Guatemalan military personnel with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

I thank Tanzania for having taken the initiative to invite the Security Council, which regularly considers the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi, to hold a debate on the regional environment in the Great Lakes region.

This is a timely debate. The process of political transition in both Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo has reached a significant stage thanks to the determination of the Burundian and the Congolese peoples and the support of the international community. The electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be concluded. Not only is a successful electoral outcome in the Democratic Republic of the Congo crucial for the citizens and political institutions of that country, but it would also contribute to the stability of the region.

We believe that those national achievements will be consolidated only if the leaders of those countries and of neighbouring States normalize their relations and work together to eliminate the root causes of recurring conflict. To that end, leaders of 11 countries are negotiating a Security, Stability and Development Pact in the context of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. In itself, that Conference is a confidence-building measure. It has already helped obtain a greater convergence of views on aspects such as the draft protocol on non-aggression, mutual defence and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The Conference is the only forum in which countries of three African subregions can deal in an integrated way with the linkages between conflict, the exploitation of natural resources, governance and development. It also provides for the participation of civil society.

Canada urges the countries of the Conference to finalize the proposed Pact and to hold the second Summit as early as possible. We look forward to learning about the priority commitments that they will be undertaking to bring about peace in the core of the region and about how they intend to ensure follow-up.

We draw the Council's attention to resolution 1625 (2005), which requests the Secretary-General to implement measures agreed by the concerned countries in addressing the root causes of armed conflict, which is what they are doing in the context of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region.

For those reasons, as a partner and as co-chair of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, Canada calls on the United Nations to continue its support, in partnership with the African Union, to enable the Conference to successfully conclude its work.

This debate is essentially an appeal to the leaders of countries to fulfil their responsibility to protect their populations, as hundreds of thousands of people are suffering as a result of situations of conflict and insecurity. At the 2005 world summit, our leaders made a firm commitment to implement the principles of the responsibility to protect, through the Security Council.

Not only do the leaders of the countries of the Great Lakes region bear the responsibility for ensuring lasting peace in their region, but they must shoulder that responsibility with respect to people who were victims of the two worst humanitarian crises in the world, which have been ongoing for a decade in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in northern Uganda. We believe it is essential that the draft resolution recognize that responsibility. Moreover, we underline the importance of the responsibility to ensure the security and access of humanitarian personnel and assistance to vulnerable persons.

During the open Security Council debate on 9 December 2005, we had the opportunity to revisit the issue of the physical and legal protection of civilians. We emphasized that it was important that the Council ensure that that issue remain a top priority in its decisions and actions.

We therefore fully support the reference made in the draft resolution to the provisions of resolution 1649 (2005) aimed at putting an end to the activities of the militias and foreign armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo — the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the former Interahamwe, the Forces nationales de libération and others — which continue to destabilize the heart of the region.

(*spoke in English*)

We commend the efforts made by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Operation in Burundi and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, and we encourage the Secretary-General to find ways for United Nations missions to further support Governments in protecting their citizens.

We again draw to the Council's attention the atrocities perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda. The LRA is a tragedy for Ugandans — particularly women and children at risk — and is hindering United Nations missions in the region. Once more we call on the Council to include on its agenda the situation in northern Uganda and to examine the possibility of adopting a resolution dealing with the destabilization caused by the LRA in the region.

We know that there can be no peace without justice in the region and that there can be no justice without reconciliation. We acknowledge and support the efforts in various quarters to put an end, through political negotiation, to the many intolerable situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, the Sudan and northern Uganda.

As for the challenges facing the Sudan, and in view of the impunity with which the militias are still carrying out their activities in the Darfur region, we urge the Council to ensure the implementation of the measures it has taken with regard to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the monitoring and implementing of its resolutions.

Because atrocities, sexual aggression and sexual violence persist, justice also requires an end to the impunity with which perpetrators violate human rights and humanitarian law. To that end, we strongly support efforts to build independent and reliable national judicial institutions, and we call upon each country in the region to cooperate with and support the International Criminal Court in its investigations of crimes against humanity.

In its resolution 1265 (1999), the Council committed itself to responding to situations where civilians were being targeted or where assistance to them was deliberately obstructed. Our delegation firmly believes that the Council must be timely in its engagement and vigilant in its monitoring and that it must have the political will to draw upon the full range of measures at its disposal in support of civilian protection.

(*spoke in French*)

The demographic and physical aspects of the region, as well as decades of population displacement, are challenges that can be overcome only by joint and sustained efforts on the part of the region's leaders and help from the international community. We believe that the appropriate regional and subregional bodies, in conjunction with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, must work much more closely together on priority projects aimed at, inter alia, facilitating the reintegration of young people into productive life, recognizing the right of displaced persons to property and establishing infrastructure.

We reiterate the Council's demand, in resolution 1649 (2005), that all States neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the Government of National Unity and Transition, impede any kind of support to the illegal exploitation of Congolese natural resources, particularly by preventing the flow of such resources through their respective territories.

We welcome the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission at the world summit. We believe that the Commission could focus its attention not only on countries, but also on their regional dimension. Furthermore, we believe that this is an opportunity for the Security Council to follow up on resolution 1631 (2005) by inviting the African Union to cooperate with the Peacebuilding Commission on this issue, thus reinforcing the partnership between the United Nations and the Union.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Antoinette Batumubwira, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Burundi.

Ms. Batumubwira (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I am pleased to address the Security Council for the second time in two months. I should like to take this opportunity, Madam President, to wish you, on behalf of the Government of Burundi and of my delegation and on my own behalf, our best wishes for 2006.

I should also like to reiterate our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and to the Security Council for their tireless commitment to the cause of peace and security throughout the world and in particular to assisting Burundi in its quest for peace and reconciliation. My thanks go also to the United Republic of Tanzania, which took the positive initiative of holding this meeting after having hosted the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Great Lakes region.

In addition, I should like to join previous speakers in expressing my condolences to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the Government of Guatemala and the families of the Blue Helmets who lost their lives in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is also appropriate to ask those gathered here to think about the many victims of the tragedies that have taken place and are still taking place in this region.

In recent years, the Great Lakes region, to which my country belongs, has been marked by massive violations of the right to life and periods of paralysis and unacceptable reverses following promises of democratic progress. That is why this United Nations meeting on the Great Lakes region of Africa is so important, because it is being held at a time when a number of countries "on the ground" have been making undeniable progress and laying the foundations for peace and democracy after years of tragedies and transitional processes. Indeed, those countries — which yesterday were in conflict and today are in transition, emerging from conflict or even peacebuilding — deserved substantial consultations with the international community with a view to appropriate support measures.

With the adoption of resolutions 1291 (2000) of 24 February 2000 and 1304 (2000) of 16 June 2000, the Security Council has played a crucial role — which my delegations welcomes — in organizing the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union. Those efforts culminated in the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the region, on 19 and 20 November 2004, which concluded with the signature, in the presence of witnesses from the region and international partners, of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

As a result of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration, we can say that, after having studied the major issues, the countries of the region have now agreed on a number of common principles, protocols and priority action plans that they have defined and that they are committed to following in the common interests of peace, security, democracy and development in the Great Lakes region.

Having accomplished their part of the task, they ask that the international community declare the region a specific zone for reconstruction and development, provided with a special reconstruction fund. Accordingly, we should consider Zone 1 — including Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — which has been the source of the interconnected conflicts of the Great Lakes region, as a priority within that specific zone. Until zone 1 is safe and stable, particularly in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, everything that has been rebuilt will remain in jeopardy, and the hoped-for results will not be achieved.

Following 12 years of conflict, five months ago Burundi proudly took its place once again within the international community, as a result of a long process of negotiations and transitions and following six elections. For us, this is not an end but only one stage of a lengthy process.

The welcome given by the international community to the significant progress made by Burundi is encouraging. I wish to assure the Council of our commitment to maintaining this momentum and to strengthening our resolve to consolidate the peace that has been restored and the exercise of democracy.

We in Burundi are mindful of the fact that we must urgently take up the tremendous challenges of reconstruction and development. Indeed, our institutions — democratically elected in a bottom-up process — will be judged on the basis of whether they can meet the minimum, fully legitimate socio-economic needs of the people of Burundi and achieve ongoing progress, with every day bringing greater

peace, stability and prosperity. Indeed, democracy must lead to socio-economic progress.

Twelve years of lethal conflict and instability have taken a heavy toll in human life and have resulted in the displacement of numerous people within the country and in many refugee flows outside the country, generalized poverty — the current rate is 68 per cent — and the destruction and degradation of the socio-economic infrastructure. The destructive effects of conflict can be seen in particular in the health and education infrastructures; in the area of housing and of the ecosystem; in food insecurity, which is exacerbated by weather conditions in some parts of the country; the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic; and the crushing debt load for Burundi, which is now the fourth-least-developed country in the world — and those are just some of the issues.

Along these lines, in order to allow the international community to help us in our efforts to coordinate and mobilize resources, a programme of action based on the Millennium Development Goals will be made available. Initially, a donors conference will be held on 28 February 2006, on an emergency basis, which will allow us to take action very swiftly and implement quick-impact projects to benefit a population that has very urgent needs. After that, a roundtable of donors is scheduled for the end of September 2006, based on the strategic framework to combat poverty — a document which will soon be completed.

We are hopeful that these two forums will yield concrete results. Our hope and our optimism with respect to international support that is geared to our specific needs in terms of stepping up reconstruction and growth, economic recovery and post-conflict development are based not only on our own success but also on the commitment of our traditional partners and of all of those who are working to ensure that our shared values prevail and who, throughout the world, understand our insistence on the existence of interactive linkages between peace, democracy, stability and development.

On 20 December 2005, the Security Council, together with the General Assembly, established the Peacebuilding Commission, which we welcome. This is for us a very encouraging sign of the will of the international community to promote, on a priority basis, greater solidarity and international cooperation leading to a substantial increase in levels of assistance to countries emerging from conflict.

That intergovernmental advisory body — which represents a very positive development — will find in Burundi an operational framework managed by a national coordinating committee for assistance, established by the Government on 12 December 2005, which is working in concert with our development partners.

In November 2005, I gave a generally positive picture of the security situation in Burundi. Reforms in the areas of defence and security, and particularly the integration within the Burundi National Defence Force and national police of the former armed forces of Burundi and of the six former armed movements that signed ceasefire agreements with the Government, have taken place to the satisfaction of the two parties, and the two entities are already up and running.

Against the backdrop of the upcoming establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we have been freeing political prisoners, in keeping with the recommendations of the Arusha Agreement. In the area of good governance, an anti-corruption law has been adopted by the National Assembly.

With respect to the question of the Palipehutu-Forces Nationales de Libération (Palipehutu-FNL), which continues to send mixed messages while remaining intransigent and maintaining its alliance with the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a resolution of the problem will require robust measures. That is also the view of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, as set out in the letter dated 21 October 2005 addressed to the Council and in resolution 1649 (2005) of 21 December 2005, which requires, among other things, the establishment of a consistent overall strategy for the disarmament, repatriation and reintegration of foreign combatants operating in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are pleased to inform the Council that Palipehutu combatants are surrendering to the Burundian authorities within the country and to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to be repatriated, proof of the isolation of that group, against whose leadership sanctions have been imposed.

The Great Lakes region is working actively to become an area of lasting peace and security, of political and social stability, and of shared growth and development. The leaders of the countries concerned have individually and collectively made a commitment in that respect. Burundi would like to reiterate its determination to ensure the successful outcome of the international conference process in the Great Lakes. In so doing, we would like to be assured of ongoing support from the United Nations, the Security Council and the Group of Friends, to which we would like once again to convey our appreciation for the considerable assistance it has provided since the beginning of the process.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Georges Rebelo Chicoti, Deputy Minister for External Relations of Angola.

Mr. Chicoti (Angola): Madam President, I would like to congratulate Tanzania on its assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January and to express satisfaction at the attention devoted to Africa. This is in the best tradition of Tanzania's dedication to the most worthy causes of our continent.

May I also commend Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for the key role that he and his team are playing in the implementation of the Great Lakes agenda.

During Angola's two-year term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, this body, as well as the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, held meetings on the same issue.

My delegation is therefore very appreciative to you, Madam President, for keeping alive the interest of the Security Council, and, through it, the interest of international community in the problems affecting this important region.

This is also the right place to thank the international Community in general and in particular the members of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes region for their moral and material support to the Conference. We therefore appeal for the continuation of this support.

The holding of the first Summit Conference and the adoption of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration constitute a turning point in the history of the region. The full participation in the Conference of all States concerned is a clear demonstration of the regional dimension of the problem and also an expression of the capacity of our peoples to overcome differences when vital common interests are at stake.

The Great Lakes region, considered in the past as a disastrous and conflict-ridden area, is gearing up for an overdue revival that has brought hope back to our peoples.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo held a constitutional referendum successfully — an important step towards the consolidation of the transitional arrangements before the forthcoming elections.

In neighbouring Burundi, the holding of presidential elections in August 2005 ended the transitional period and opened a new era of national reconciliation and economic recovery. In the Central African Republic, constitutional order has been restored. The United Republic of Tanzania has held successful general elections, while Angola, Zambia and Uganda are preparing for elections. The peace process in the Sudan is under way, in spite of the instability in Darfur, the consequences of which should be adequately addressed. Those are clear signs of the commitment of the countries of the region to reach peace, democracy and development, in conformity with the goals of the International Conference on the Great Lakes.

My delegation is deeply concerned, however, by the continuation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of atrocities committed by criminal groups responsible for hundreds of summary executions, rapes, beatings and hostage-taking of civilians. The national army of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have taken action against those criminal groups. We commend that action. In our view, it represents a sound lesson for the concept of United Nations peacekeeping operations, as it gives a clear indication of the measures to be taken against criminal groups that choose to challenge the international community and the will of a nation to live in peace.

The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be respected and preserved. In that regard, I want to reiterate the commitment of my Government to continue to train the

Congolese national army, together with other partners, particularly Belgium and South Africa.

In my own country, in the three and a half years of peace and the post-conflict era that we have experienced, the strategic priorities of the Government of Unity and National Reconciliation have been directed towards the social and productive reintegration of demobilized soldiers and people displaced during the war, towards improving the delivery of basic social services to people throughout the country, and towards macroeconomic stabilization. As a result of those efforts, the climate of tolerance and democratic cordiality between the political parties has been re-established and the country is rapidly proceeding with the organization of free, fair and transparent elections following the approval by the National Assembly of the electoral package in July 2005 and the establishment of the National Electoral Commission.

In the economic and social fields, considerable improvements have been achieved. Since the end of the conflict, the share of the budget allocated to the social sector has increased from 12 per cent to 60 per cent. That has enabled, among other actions, the reintegration of four million displaced people in their areas of origin or choice, while we continue with the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Angola needs the support of the international community in order to improve its landmine clearing programme and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of economic infrastructures destroyed during the war.

Angola is committed to sharing its experiences of post-conflict recovery and to contributing to the materialization of the main objectives of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

In that connection, in September 2005 the Republic of Angola hosted in Luanda the meeting of the Regional Preparatory Committee of the Conference on the Great Lakes region. The Luanda meeting dealt with such issues as the joint security management of common borders, combating transnational crime and terrorism, the development of border zones and human security, as well as non-aggression and mutual defence.

The deployment of four United Nations missions in States members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes — Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and the Sudan — should be duly used to address the cross-border issues and other challenges, including monitoring of the arms embargo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

By working out a protocol against the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region have shown that they are committed to dealing with that crucial issue. However, the efforts of the region should be complemented by the implementation of the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 1625 (2005), in particular those regarding the illegal exploitation of and trafficking in natural resources and high-value commodities.

In our view, finding long-lasting solutions to African conflicts is also a development challenge, considering the devastating impact of conflict on development. That should also be the approach of the international community towards the problems affecting the region.

Bearing that reality in mind, the countries of the Great Lakes Conference are in the process of negotiating an important legal framework to promote development, including a protocol on a specific reconstruction and development zone, as well as a special fund for the reconstruction and development of the Great Lakes region.

The adoption of Security Council resolution 1631 (2005) opened a new era of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations. The African Union and subregional organizations may play their role if an effective response is given to the problems of the lack of resources and of how to make partnerships between the two mechanisms as efficient as possible. Useful lessons on the negative impact of the lack of resources should therefore be drawn from the deployment of the African Union's missions in Burundi and the Sudanese region of Darfur, while reflecting on the improvement in cooperation between the Security Council and regional organizations.

Before I conclude, allow me to stress that the coordinated conduct of the process of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region by the United Nations and the African Union offers a good example

of cooperation and coordination between the two organizations.

For my delegation, the newly established Peacebuilding Commission should also benefit from the experience and expertise developed in the Great Lakes process.

Finally, my delegation expresses its full support for the draft resolution before us.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Mr. Simbarashe Mumbengegwi.

Mr. Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe): I am delighted to see you, my sister and dear colleague, presiding over this important meeting as President of the Security Council for this month. I note with appreciation that, barely a month after the successful elections in your great country and your subsequent appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs, you have managed to redraw the attention of this body to the issue of the Great Lakes region. In doing so, you have redirected this principal organ of the United Nations to focus on its core business of the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is fortuitous that the question of peace and security in the Great Lakes region is being considered under the presidency of the United Republic of Tanzania, a country that, for decades, has borne the brunt of hosting thousands of refugees from the region and beyond. Your country was also home to our liberation movements in the southern African region. We salute the gallant, hospitable and generous people of Tanzania. It was therefore logical that Dar es-Salaam, the haven of peace, was the venue of the first International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in November 2004, which was held under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union.

Let me indicate here that the Great Lakes region is the linchpin for the attainment of lasting peace and stability in many parts of Africa. Conflicts in that region could impact negatively on countries in other regions and hamper efforts towards the common goals of development and regional integration. Zimbabwe is closely linked to the Great Lakes region through common membership in regional organizations, such as the Southern Africa Development Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. It is in that light that we value the resolution of conflict in the Great Lakes that this debate seeks to promote.

The success of any peace process rests on the political commitment made by the leaders of the countries concerned, and that in turn is demonstrated by integrity, transparency and the ability to trust and be trusted, each by the other. However, the attainment of enduring peace takes more than just political commitment. It requires that the root causes of conflict in the region, which have long been identified as lack of development in all its aspects, be addressed. That is where the international community has a big role to play.

The first International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region showed that the international community was coming to grips with the Great Lakes problem. The Dar es-Salaam Declaration clearly indicated the direction the peace process must take and how the international community can strengthen it. Let me recognize here the role that the African Union has played and continues to play in that process. Indeed, it is only natural that the African Union, through its Peace and Security Council, should take the lead in efforts to seek a lasting solution to problems in the Great lakes region. While welcoming the progress that has so far been made towards the consolidation of peace and stability in the region, we are cognizant of the fact that Africa falls short on the resources necessary to put in place mechanisms to ensure lasting peace in conflict areas. We therefore welcome the continued efforts of the United Nations and the international community to support the peace process and post-conflict reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there is an urgent need to assist the Government in order to enable it to hold free, fair and transparent elections following the successful referendum on the constitution. Resources are needed in order to continue to improve the institutional and infrastructural capacities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While violence in the country has declined in the past year, the need to further create a stable and peaceful environment, both for the holding of elections and for the return of refugees and displaced persons, remains paramount. The United

Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo requires the continued support and mandate of the Security Council to enable it to get on top of the situation and to disband all militias and rebels based in the country.

The newly elected Government in Burundi needs to be supported through a visible, predictable and concerted international effort aimed at instituting a credible reconstruction effort to lay the basis for sustainable development.

The attainment of lasting peace in the Great Lakes region goes beyond the provision of humanitarian assistance. In our view, the newly created Peacebuilding Commission should be the leading United Nations organ to address the challenges in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere. It has its work cut out for it with regard to the countries of the Great Lakes, and its success or failure may be judged by its ability to address those and other challenges in Africa, as well as similar situations in other parts of the world.

Let me conclude by calling on the United Nations to facilitate the holding of a second Great Lakes summit with a view to identifying ways to implement the Declaration of the first International Conference on the region. We need to focus on practical aspects of cooperation between the United Nations system and the African Union's Peace and Security Council. It is our belief that the inter-agency coordination of the United Nations system needs to be enhanced to spearhead post-conflict reconstruction for the long-term stability of the Great Lakes region.

Nana Effah-Apenteng (Ghana): Let me first express my delegation's delight in seeing you, Madam, preside over the Council's deliberations. We commend your delegation for organizing this timely debate on the Great Lakes region of Africa during your presidency.

My delegation would also like to welcome the various ministers of foreign affairs who have graced this meeting with their presence.

For more than a decade, the Great Lakes region has been in profound turmoil. Through a game of shifting alliances, and because of geographical proximity in an area with porous borders, conflicts have tended to merge, thus giving rise to a huge zone of instability. That vast and resource-rich region has been the theatre of widespread conflicts that have brought death and destruction, displacement and great suffering to its inhabitants.

The Security Council has rallied the support of the international community in responding to the grave challenges posed by those disastrous conflicts. Apart from undertaking various field tours in the area, the Council has mandated the stationing of thousands of United Nations personnel, including peacekeepers, who have not only saved lives but also alleviated the suffering of many displaced persons, including the most vulnerable segments of the population, especially women and children.

My delegation remains convinced that the desired breakthrough for peace can be attained in the Great Lakes region, as it was in Sierra Leone and Liberia, after 15 agonizing years of seemingly intractable conflicts.

Now more than ever, sustainable peace seems very much within reach. Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have taken their first brave steps towards a new era of democratic governance and enduring stability. We also consider as a decisive turning point in the peace process the First Summit of Heads of State and Government held in December 2004 in Tanzania, the most important outcome of which was the Dar es-Salaam Declaration of Principles on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. The declaration is a bold attempt to tackle head on the issues that clearly constitute the foundation for lasting stability and sustainable development in the region.

It is on the basis of an agreement between the concerned parties, within this broad framework, that we can hope to resolve the threats posed by the continuing presence and activities of the foreign armed groups and militias, such as the Forces Democratique de Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR), the Palipehutu-Forces Nationales de Liberation (FNL) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and bring an end to the atrocities committed against the local population and attacks against United Nation personnel and humanitarian workers. The recent clashes between suspected elements of the LRA and United Nations peacekeepers in the eastern part of the Democratic republic of the Congo, which resulted in the death of eight Guatemalan soldiers and serious injuries to five others, serve to underscore the imperative need for forceful action to counteract the group's outrageous

and violent conduct, which continues to pose a threat to peace, security and stability in the whole region.

The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda are to be commended for their very constructive engagement with the militias, leading to the peaceful repatriation of some FDLR members to Rwanda. We also support the ongoing political and military pressure being exerted on such forces through joint operations by the Congolese Government and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). In the same vein, we welcome the initiatives of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission, comprising Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, to increase dialogue among the countries in the region.

It is evident from the outcome of the Dar Summit that only a comprehensive and integrated strategy, drawn up in a transparent way and with the participation of all the relevant stakeholders, would provide the best tonic for a durable solution to the myriad problems and conflicts that have bedevilled the region. We therefore endorse the Secretary-General's plea to the Security Council to convey a strong message of support for the International Conference on the Great Lakes region and to urge the parties to renew their commitment to respect both the spirit and letter of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration and to make every effort to hold the Nairobi Summit and sign the Security, Stability and Development Pact.

It should also be possible for the parties to agree on a specific date for the second Summit, within the coming weeks so that the meeting can take place soon after the end of the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in late this year.

Clearly, the process of achieving peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region requires a collaborative effort of regional and international proportions. Every conflict in the region has been identified as having cross-border linkages and effects. Consequently, a regional approach involving African ownership and international partnership needs to be enhanced. From this perspective the implementation of resolution 1625 (2005) on conflict prevention can be applied to the situation in the Great Lakes region.

In a wider context, there is the need to further enhance the burgeoning cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union (AU) in accordance with Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, and as recently reaffirmed at the world summit and in resolution 1631 (2005). We therefore call for strengthened coordination and communications between the United Nations and the AU, particularly between the Security Council and the African Union's Peace and Security Council in mediation and peacekeeping efforts in the Great Lakes region. Aligned to this concept of practical cooperation is the need to ensure that the time frame for the international community's coordinated intervention in crises identified in the region is shortened.

In the past, Council members have had the occasion to urge African countries to adhere to the African Union Non-Aggression and Common Defence Pact, adopted in Abuja on 31 January 2005, and to sign, where appropriate, subregional pacts on peace, security, democracy, good governance and development. By the same token, the role of the United Nations system in supporting the implementation of the Pact needs to be further strengthened. Such action in the region would be consistent with the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

My delegation earlier mentioned the success chalked up by the Burundi peace process. It is our considered view that Burundi is a classic case which provides a unique and golden opportunity for the Peacebuilding Commission to exercise its mandate in helping a country emerging from war to peace. Similarly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo could be considered by the Commission, in the event of the successful completion of its electoral timetable.

It is time we took note that wars are not won or lost. They are caused by men, by man-made institutions, by the way in which man has organized his society. What man has made, man can change. This organ, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, has been presented with yet another opportunity to make positive and decisive contributions towards the achievement of lasting peace and security, and bring to closure a long and protracted period of conflict and instability in the Great Lakes Region. Let us seize the moment to act. We support the draft resolution that has been prepared by the delegations of the region.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (spoke in French): Africa and the Great Lakes have passed and are to have one

Madam President, presiding, and to pay tribute to Tanzania, whose dedication to peace in the Great Lakes region — to which today's meeting attests — is well known to us. I should like also to greet the ministers and envoys present, especially those from the countries of the region, who have come to New York to take part in our debate. The members of the Council who accompanied me on missions we have conducted in Central Africa join me in welcoming them. Finally, let me say how much we appreciate having in our midst in this Council another country from that vast region, the Republic of the Congo, to which I wish to convey our congratulations upon the accession of President Sassou Nguesso to the presidency of the African Union.

What is taking place in the Great Lakes region of Africa concerns us all. To a great extent, it is there that peace, security and democracy may succeed or fail for all of Africa, as may the development of that vast region. It is likewise of concern to us all because one cannot overstate the suffering that the population of that region has endured, and which we continue to witness today.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the United Nations should be deploying its largest peacekeeping operation today to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The international community has invested great efforts in advancing peace in the Great Lakes region. United Nations activity in this regard is well known. It is likewise often pointed out that we should pay tribute to the leaders of the region, of the African Union and of a number of countries which, like South Africa or Tanzania, have spared no effort to bring peace to the region. Thanks to those combined endeavours, we have succeeded in placing the initiatives being pursued in the region on a positive track. Burundians can be proud of the successes scored there, and the Congolese clearly seem to be moving in the same direction.

Nonetheless, all of this remains quite fragile. Major obstacles have yet to be overcome, as the President of the European Union pointed out earlier. For my part, I would stress the following points.

First, the international community must focus its efforts on the priorities. The first is elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those elections must be brought to a successful conclusion in the time remaining before 30 June. The elections are important, but are not an end in themselves. They respond to a deep aspiration among the population for peace and reconciliation, and one cannot help being moved by the hopes that they inspire in the people. When we went to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we clearly saw how much the Congolese people wanted those elections.

We must succeed in this process, because we must dispel the uncertainty. Democratic institutions must be set up in the Democratic Republic of Congo, because that great nation — that vast territory within the heart of Africa — must have a solid and stable State, and a solid and stable Democratic Republic of the Congo is the best guarantee for the development of the entire region and is crucial for the region's stability.

There are three essential requirements for the success of the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A truly integrated national army capable of providing security for the country and its borders must be established; the reconciliation efforts must continue, so that no one is excluded and that no one can exclude himself from public life; and the rule of law must be established throughout the territory, with the wealth of the nation being managed in a transparent fashion.

In Burundi, peacebuilding is a matter of urgency. More than ever before, we must support that country, which has become a successful model for reconciliation in the region, so as to guarantee that the achievements of the Arusha process become permanent.

I would like to say a few words about relations among the countries of the region. Much remains to be done if we are to organize the dialogue that is essential among those countries. There is still too much suspicion, too many hard feelings, too much mistrust. The second Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, of which we have high expectations, must not be a missed opportunity. It is therefore very important to focus on the crucial issue of peace and security.

Armed groups are a problem of particular concern in the region. Whether or not they are a threat to the security of States, they are, today, the main cause of the population's suffering. We must tackle that problem together. However, there will be no solution until the armed groups stop receiving support from the outside and until they stop the traffic in arms and natural resources that fuels their activities. Of course,

there can be no solution that is exclusively military in nature.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the question of the suffering of the people. In our work in the Council, this is always at the heart of our concerns. We must always remember the tragedy of the Rwandan genocide. At that time, the international community did not live up to its responsibilities, and today, when talking about the region, the question of the protection of civilians is on everybody's mind. That is one of the most important elements of the draft resolution that we will be adopting shortly.

It is not to be tolerated that children, women and other vulnerable people find themselves at the mercy of brutal criminal groups, such as the Lord's Resistance Army. We must all focus our attention on the humanitarian tragedy in northern Uganda. Mr. Douste-Blazy, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, will be visiting Uganda in a few days' time in order to discuss with our Ugandan partners what we can do in order to improve the situation.

Eight Guatemalan Blue Helmets serving in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were killed last Monday. The problem has taken on a regional dimension, and it is time for the Security Council to address it. We believe that the draft resolution on which we will shortly be voting, which follows up on the Jan Egeland, will make it possible for us to move forward.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (spoke in Chinese): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Tanzania for having taken the initiative to convene this public meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes region. I would like to welcome you, Madam Foreign Minister, and to thank you for personally presiding over this meeting.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Foreign Ministers and other high officials of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Botswana, Rwanda, the Sudan, Burundi, Angola, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia, as well as to the representatives of the African Union, who have travelled from afar to attend this important meeting. I would also like to welcome the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, the European Union Commissioner and the special envoys of the Netherlands and of Canada, who have come here to participate in our discussion.

During the past decade or so, the Great Lakes region has witnessed a great deal of turbulence and conflict, which has had a huge impact on peace, security, economic development and social stability in that region and in the African continent as a whole. In recent years, despite the continuation of disputes and conflicts in some areas and the constraints on overall economic and social development, encouraging progress has been achieved as a result of the efforts of the countries and peoples of the region, with the assistance of the international community.

There is common understanding on all sides that without stability in the Great Lakes region, there can be no peace in Africa, and that without prosperity in the Great Lakes region, Africa's renaissance cannot take place. China supports United Nations efforts to address the special needs of the Great Lakes region and advocates that the Security Council put the question at the top of its agenda and make more substantial inputs.

There is an old saying in Chinese: With united and determined will, mountains can be moved. The hard-working and ingenious people of the Great Lakes region long for a stable and prosperous life. That is their will, which, in due course, will yield the hoped-for results. The Great Lakes region is endowed with rich natural resources, and now that the situation is moving in a positive direction, we are convinced that it will not be long before peace is fully restored and stable development achieved in the region.

China is of the view that in order to resolve the conflict in the Great Lakes region in a comprehensive manner, achieve national reconciliation and bring the political transition to fruition so that the region can embark on the road to sustainable development, a number of issues require special attention.

First, the will of the countries concerned must be fully respected. The positive developments in the Great Lakes region are inseparable from the will and efforts of the Governments and peoples concerned. The advance of political transition in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi is based on the broad support of the people. The facts on the ground show that, without the political will of the countries concerned and the participation of the local people, there cannot be lasting peace in helping the countries

of the Great Lakes region, the international community should heed their concerns and their proposals.

Secondly, comprehensive cooperation at the subregional level should be further strengthened. The interests of the countries of the Great Lakes region are closely linked. It is vital for the countries and the parties concerned in the region to seek a proper solution to the relevant issues through consultations and dialogue on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. All countries concerned should honour the commitments they have undertaken and restore stability throughout the Great Lakes region and ensure good-neighbourly relations among each other in pursuit of peace, prosperity and the development of the region as a whole.

We hope that the second Summit of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region will be convened soon and that it will once again be crowned with success, producing a programme of action for the promotion of the peace, harmony, development and progress of the Great Lakes region.

Thirdly, assistance by the international community should be maintained and increased. The political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a critical juncture. Preparations for the elections urgently require the support of the international community. In Burundi's transition towards post-conflict reconstruction, international assistance remains essential. We hope that the international community and other African regions will continue to actively support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the election process and help consolidate peace in Burundi. It remains imperative that we support the unremitting efforts of those two countries to achieve peace, stability and economic reconstruction.

China wholeheartedly supports the continued important United Nations role in that regard. The Security Council should give positive consideration to all reasonable requests of the countries of the region and act accordingly. We hope that the newly established Peacebuilding Commission will also make the post-conflict reconstruction of the Great Lakes region a priority item on its agenda.

As a true friend to all countries of the Great Lakes region, China has always followed closely the developments in the situation in the region. We have made practical efforts to promote the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi, we have actively participated in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and we have provided bilateral assistance, within our capacities, to the economic and social development of those two countries. We are ready to continue and strengthen our comprehensive cooperation with countries of the Great Lakes region and to play a positive role in promoting the early achievement of lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

In conclusion, the Chinese delegation supports the draft resolution prepared by the United Republic of Tanzania (S/2006/51) and would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Tanzania for its diligent work in that regard. We believe that the adoption of the draft resolution will have a positive impact on the efforts to promote the stability and development of the Great Lakes region.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Raphael Tuju, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kenya.

Mr. Tuju (Kenya): I am happy to participate in this debate on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. Permit me to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Madam Foreign Minister, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and on your personal efforts in convening this debate. I assure you of my delegation's support.

Kenya applauds Tanzania's initiative aimed at strengthening collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union. That initiative has several antecedents both here at the United Nations and in Africa, all aimed at preventing armed conflict and securing thriving democratic peace in Africa. Indeed, the African Union's motivation in establishing its own Peace and Security Council was informed by the need to address the chronic cycle of conflict and instability that plagues our continent.

There has been tangible progress in focusing the attention of the international community on the problems of the Great Lakes region. Kenya and countries of the region have been involved in solid collaborative efforts to stabilize the region. The lessons learned from previous experience in the region and elsewhere motivated the international community to convene the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which eventually, in November 2004,

led to the adoption of the historic Dar es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

I consider the second Summit of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which will take place in the middle of this year in Nairobi, to be very important. But I hasten to add that it will be as important as we choose to make it; otherwise, it will be just another of those conferences that come up with the right resolution language and nothing more. But we cannot afford that, given the crisis we have in the region.

I should like to draw the Council's attention to one of the most important root causes of conflict in our region: ethnic tensions. Many of the countries in the region are actually only geographical phenomena with ruler-drawn borders and therefore not nation-States. For example, in my country, Kenya, we have some 42 different nationalities, which are often referred to as tribes. Our greatest challenge as a country is how to forge lasting nationhood out of that diversity. Our diversity is a blessing in many ways, but it is also a curse of which we are quite aware. The curse elements include those moments when ethnic tensions require only a small trigger, and riots in the streets may ensue.

In North America, Europe and Asia, when tensions such as those along racial divides culminate in riots in the streets, there are enough resources and mechanisms to manage and contain the stress. In our region, where the coping institutional frameworks are mostly in their embryonic stages, ethnic tensions that spill into the streets have, sadly, degenerated into full-scale civil war and, in many instances of which we are all too aware, genocide. We have seen this even in those countries that were previously perceived to be stable: Rwanda and, at the moment, Côte d'Ivoire. We are all surprised, yet we should not be, because we know that those tensions are actually there, albeit below the surface. I submit that because we know that these ethnic tensions exist — usually below the surface — we must, as a region, confront the challenge boldly and decisively within the context of conflict prevention, rather than relying only on the fire-brigade and ambulance approach to conflict management.

I would like to congratulate the Tanzanian Government through you, Madam President, because in our region it was probably only Tanzania that, quite early in its history, managed to build a stable nationhood and to reduce the inter-ethnic tensions that mark most of the countries in the region. That is a legacy of the vision of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, which all of us, together with Tanzanians, should forever cherish.

As we work towards the second Summit of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, and even as we welcome the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, we must not forget the fact that, historically, as many as 50 per cent of resolved conflicts recur within a period of five years. That is a very high failure rate: odds of 50-50 are for gambling, not for finding solutions. The high rate of relapse should awaken us to the fact that a peaceful settlement that does not address the root causes of a conflict in the short term or make the necessary investment in long-term solutions and prevention programmes is actually very shallow. What is the merit of continuing with an approach that we know will result mostly in relapse? Permanent solutions are within our grasp if we choose to take the right steps. As we go to Nairobi, let us be bold enough to confront the challenge and develop visions, strategies and programmes that can address the root causes.

We are ready to work together, to summon the courage to look in the mirror, to identify the roots of the problem and to work together with Ambassador Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to address them. We welcome the renewal of the mandate of his Office. However, we feel that its mandate and role should be oriented towards the long term, not just towards conflict resolution and post-conflict management; it should also prioritize conflict prevention.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to our partners, the Group of Friends, for their invaluable support for our region. I pay a special tribute to Denmark, Canada and the Netherlands, not only for their engagement in our region, but also for helping to sustain the interest of others.

We all agree that peacebuilding is important work, although it is a lengthy process. Rather than describing the obstacles, of which we are all aware, I would like to add that the next concrete steps should be on the humanitarian and social fronts. I propose the following.

First, we should create an environment that ensures better protection and welfare for refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons. States have to comply with international instruments on human rights and also identify and disarm combatants and separate them from civilians.

Secondly, we must set up a regional legal framework for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons.

Thirdly, we must implement the legal framework on the property rights of returning internally displaced persons and refugees. Article 69 of the 2004 Dar es-Salaam Declaration commits us to that objective. We should finalize the relevant protocol quickly.

Fourthly, we must work within the region to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian workers and associated personnel during the conduct of their duties, as well as to ensure free and unhindered humanitarian access to persons in need of assistance.

Kenya welcomes the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. This forum affords us a historic opportunity to test-run the Peacebuilding Commission in the Great Lakes region, the Horn of Africa and other areas of conflict. After our discussions today, the ideas embodied in the draft resolution should be adopted and speedily implemented in the Great Lakes region and in the Horn of Africa, and the benefits should accrue to the many people who have longed for peace and tranquillity, which have proved so elusive.

In concluding, I would once again urge that, while we convene important forums such as today's, we must remember that it is pertinent always to address the root causes of conflict and to always seek the direction and the views and input of the victims and urgently address their grievances to the extent possible.

I take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome to those who will be participating in the second Great Lakes Conference in Nairobi.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Sam K. Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda.

Mr. Kutesa (Uganda): On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate the United Republic of Tanzania on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month of January. I wish to pledge Uganda's full support during Tanzania's presidency, and I am delighted, Madam President, to see you presiding over the Council.

May I also take this opportunity to register our appreciation to the United Republic of Tanzania for the initiative of convening this important meeting at this time, when many of the countries of the Great Lakes region are grappling with the challenges of peace, security, justice, post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Before I make my comments, allow me, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uganda, to convey our condolences to the Government of Guatemala, the United Nations and the families of the eight United Nations peacekeepers who died in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the hands of the notorious terrorist group known as the Lord's Resistance Army.

One of the best formulas that our countries have designed for resolving the contradictions in the region was the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in 1999 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was supplemented by the Luanda Agreement between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Pretoria Agreement between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2002. The tripartite plus agreement between Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, which was concluded in 2004 to deal specifically with the issue of negative forces, is another mechanism in that respect. We have also witnessed the successful conclusion of peace initiatives in Burundi and Southern Sudan. The ongoing International Conference on the Great Lakes Region has provided a framework for a vision integrating peace, security, stability and development.

It is clear that in the last five years the Great Lakes region has recorded some positive trends. The fact that the Security Council is discussing the Great Lakes region today gives us hope that those initiatives will be supported, so that the positive trends can be maintained.

My delegation is happy to state that Uganda has played, and will continue to play, an active role in support of the implementation of all these processes in various capacities.

Uganda has participated in the Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi, as Chair. It has also held the chairmanship of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), under whose auspices the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan and the Somali peace and reconciliation agreement were concluded. In addition, Uganda chaired the Political Committee which oversaw and monitored the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. We continue, along with our partners in the region, to host the Tripartite Plus meetings and to participate actively in the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

On its own accord, Uganda has taken measures to ensure that its territory is not used by negative forces to destabilize our neighbours. Those measures include expelling Congolese militia in August 2005; handing over other militia to the Congolese Government in December 2005; initiating a verification process with respect to various allegations, jointly conducted by the Uganda-Democratic Republic of the Congo military intelligence team, with the support of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC); and engaging with our neighbours in the region through joint border meetings, diplomatic representation, exchange of special envoys, joint verification mechanisms, joint security liaison offices, Amnesty Commission offices, and so on.

My delegation believes that there is a strong link between conflict and poverty in the Great Lakes region. I wish therefore to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the initiative on the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which will help to build confidence in the region as well as to create capacities and an impetus for good neighbourliness, regional cooperation and economic integration, together with sustainable peace, post-conflict reconstruction and development.

We call upon the international community to continue to support the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region's constructive process, including the implementation of the priority programmes, projects and protocols designed to entrench a culture of stability, security, good governance and development, based on the Dar es-Salaam Summit Declaration of November 2004.

The recent progress made with respect to the peace initiative in our region clearly indicates that prospects are more promising than ever before for transforming the Great Lakes region from a zone of conflict to a region of peace, stability, prosperity and cooperation in Africa.

My delegation strongly believes, however, that the most urgent challenge and the biggest obstacle to peace in the Great Lakes region remains the problem of the negative forces, especially the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the People's Redemption Army (PRA) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). It is important to recall that negative forces were the genesis of the Great Lakes conflict in the 1990s. They continue to cause untold suffering to civilian populations, resulting in excessive loss of life, humanitarian crises in refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) camps, and deepening levels of poverty in the region. The LRA, for example, has caused a massive humanitarian crisis, with 1.5 million IDPs in northern Uganda, millions of IDPs in southern Sudan, and the hampering of the return of 280,000 Sudanese refugees. I therefore appeal to the Security Council to focus on the question of foreign negative forces as one of the most urgent threats to regional peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

Uganda is committed to the objectives and mechanisms of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission mechanism between Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda as a critical component of the post-Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement activities for addressing the outstanding issue of negative forces in the Great Lakes region. We are therefore encouraged by the recent joint MONUC-Democratic Republic of the Congo armed forces operations to disarm the ADF and PRA and by efforts to disseminate information about the effectiveness of amnesty provisions in Uganda.

In that context, we look forward to the report of the Secretary-General and to a positive debate in the Security Council in March 2006 on our request for a strengthened mandate under Chapter VII, to enable MONUC to carry out an effective disarmament of the FDLR, the ADF, the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), the PRA and the LRA operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My delegation wishes to take the opportunity of today's debate to engage members of the Security Council on the question of the LRA, a well-known terrorist group based in southern Sudan and in the Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has caused thousands of deaths and inflicted tremendous suffering on the people of northern Uganda and southern Sudan as well as on animal populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For far too long, the Uganda People's Defence Force has single-handedly fought against the LRA terrorist group using a two-track policy combining military pressure and political negotiations based on peace initiatives and an effective amnesty regime, as well as measures to protect the civilian population from attacks and abductions. Uganda is also committed to working with the United Nations Secretary-General, the core partner countries — namely, the United Kingdom, the United States, Norway and the Netherlands — the European Union and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to address the practical challenges of the humanitarian situation in northern Uganda.

Although the military campaign has not completely eliminated the LRA threat to civilian population and aid workers in the Acholi subregion in northern Uganda, the UPDF has succeeded in severely weakening the LRA by reducing it from 3,000 to about 500 to 600 through defections and capture; rescuing about 18,000 abductees, including women and children, largely from the southern Sudan; stopping further abductions; taking over LRA bases in northern Uganda and the southern Sudan; and restricting LRA leaders north of Juba and Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Security has been tightened around internally displaced persons camps, including by providing escorts for civilians and aid workers. Except for the hard core LRA rebels who still believe in Joseph Kony's "holy spirit" of cult and myth, many are now defecting while on mission to commit atrocities in Uganda. We are convinced that the leadership of the LRA will never cross back into Uganda without being captured and handed over to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The Government of Uganda has also embarked on a number of peace initiatives to have the LRA conflict resolved through a negotiated settlement. An amnesty act, enacted in the year 2000, and its implementing Amnesty Commission have been put in place to accommodate those who renounce rebellion and promote reconciliation. Over 2,000 LRA rebels have taken advantage of the amnesty provisions. Major efforts for a negotiated peace settlement originated or supported by the Government since 1994 have included the Government initiatives and those of the Carter Center and of the Acholi Religious Leaders, and the Bigombe Initiative. Unfortunately, due to the lack of a political agenda by the LRA and pressure from its external backers, efforts for political negotiations with the LRA have been fruitless. As a gesture of good will and political commitment to a negotiated settlement, the Amnesty Act remains in force, and the Ugandan Government negotiating team is also in place.

I have circulated to the Security Council a document entitled "Uganda Government Interventions on the Humanitarian Situation in Northern Uganda", which details the Ugandan Government's commitment to effective interventions, in cooperation with the United Nations agencies and NGOs, to deal with the security and humanitarian situation in northern Uganda.

My delegation believes that there are strong factors that create, with the support of the United Nations Security Council and the international community, an historic opportunity to decisively deal with the LRA now. Following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Southern Sudan, both the Government of the Sudan and the regional government in southern Sudan have shown willingness to cooperate with Uganda in dealing with the threat posed by the LRA. Indeed, we hope that the agreement between the UPDF, the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the Sudanese army will bear fruit in the near future. The ICC has documented evidence and has indicted the top five LRA leaders for crimes committed against humanity in the Great Lakes region. And we have seen that, when given an adequate mandate, a United Nations force such as MONUC, working with the army of the host country, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, can be effective against negative forces such as the ADF. Lastly, the African Union (AU) and other subregional security mechanisms are now more willing and ready to play an effective role in dealing with negative forces as a threat to the maintenance of regional peace and security in Africa.

My delegation would therefore like to strongly urge the Council to undertake the following measures.

First, it should send a clear message that the countries in the Great Lakes region have the responsibility and obligation not to allow safe havens for terrorists and negative foreign rebel groups to destabilize their neighbours in the region.

Secondly, the Council should strongly support sustained efforts of MONUC and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) to forcefully disarm the negative armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and to respond positively to the request contained in the letter of the Foreign Ministers of the Tripartite Plus Joint Commission on the Great Lakes region, dated 21 October 2005 (*S/2005/667, annex*).

Thirdly, the Security Council should strongly condemn the LRA's attacks against civilians and humanitarian workers, call for the immediate cession of all the violence and urge those countries and groups that provide financial, material and logistical support to the LRA to meet their international obligations by immediately ceasing such support to the LRA.

Fourthly, the Council should call on the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take seriously their national and international obligations to ensure that their territories are not used to harbour negative elements that cause insecurity in the Great Lakes region.

Fifthly, it should urge the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to intensify military pressure to disarm the LRA as a negative foreign force operating from their territories and to cooperate fully with the ICC by implementing the arrest warrants issued by the Court on LRA terrorist leaders and to hand them over to the ICC.

Sixthly, under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council should mandate MONUC and the United Nations Advance Mission in the Sudan (UNAMIS) to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan to disarm the LRA elements operating in the southern Sudan and in Garamba National Park and in executing the ICC arrest warrants for the LRA leadership.

The Security Council should encourage countries of the Great Lakes region to enter into or strengthen various bilateral and regional arrangements, including joint security liaison and coordinated operations, joint verification mechanisms and other mechanisms to deal with negative forces, including the extradition of those not willing to take advantage of existing credible and effective amnesty regimes, as in the case of Uganda.

The Council should welcome and fully support the AU initiatives intended to forcefully disarm foreign negative forces and to urge the United Nations and the international community to extend to the AU the necessary logistics and political support.

The Council should support the establishment of a coordinating and monitoring mechanism in Kampala between the Government of Uganda, the United Nations — the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund — and the core countries, including the United Kingdom, United States, Norway, the Netherlands and others, as well as the AU and representative credible NGOs, to strategically address the humanitarian situation and resettlement of internally displaced persons in northern Uganda.

The Council should treat the Great Lakes region as a special post-conflict reconstruction zone with components for different countries and therefore adopt the zone as one of the key priorities under the Peacebuilding Commission recently established by Security Council resolution 1645 (2005) and General Assembly resolution 60/180.

Finally, my delegation urges the Security Council to support the establishment of a Great Lakes reconstruction fund.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia, His Excellency Lieutenant General Reverend Ronnie Shikapwasha.

Mr. Shikapwasha (Zambia): Madam President, allow me to congratulate you upon your country's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. The occasion is special in that the United Republic of Tanzania has also served as Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region since the first Summit, in Dar es Salaam in November 2004, when our heads of State and Government adopted the Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. We therefore wish you success as you preside over the affairs of this Council.

Zambia shares the view that peace and development are two sides of the same coin. We believe that there cannot be durable or lasting peace and security without sustainable human development and, conversely, that there cannot be any meaningful development without peace and security. We also believe that the absence of war does not always guarantee human security and dignity, particularly where poverty levels are high, nor does it guarantee peace.

Zambia therefore maintains that, since gaining political independence, many countries in the Great Lakes region, like other former colonial countries, have had to deal with the challenges of correcting the ills and inadequacies of the colonial past, while at the same time trying to meet the demands of newly independent populations to provide for new jobs, more schools, hospitals, housing and so forth. In short, peace and security have depended very much on the fight against poverty and underdevelopment; hence, the need to emphasize peacebuilding and development as a linchpin of the peace process in the Great Lakes region.

Furthermore, in accepting the fact that the root causes of Africa's wars, conflicts and political instabilities are complex and multifaceted, Zambia suggests that the approach of establishing linkages between the four thematic areas already identified in the peace process in the Great Lakes region should be maintained and strengthened.

Within that context, we believe that the emphasis on peacebuilding and development should take centre stage in the achievement of peace and security in the Great Lakes region. Therefore, Zambia would like to associate itself with the efforts towards the operationalization of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission within the context of the 2005 world summit outcome. Zambia as a nation is always seeking peace and peaceful means to attain world peace, looks forward to contributing to the activities of the Commission and is available to host any programmes and projects that will be deemed necessary in order to add value to the peace process in the Great Lakes region.

I would be remiss in my contribution if I did not account briefly for Zambia's activities in the peace process of the Great Lakes region. Within the context of peacebuilding and development, Zambia has continued to participate in United Nations and African Union peacekeeping missions, thereby maintaining its profile in global and international relations. At the regional level, every effort has been made to share the regional ownership of solutions to most of the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment in the Great Lakes region through Zambia's participation and membership in the African Union, the Southern Africa Development Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and, only recently, as a new signatory to the Peer Review Mechanism of the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

At the national level, it is important to note that in 2005 Zambia held workshops for youth, women, the media, civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, permanent secretaries as policy implementers, and parliamentarians in order to strategize their respective roles in the implementation of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration.

In the area of democracy and good governance, Zambia has just successfully completed a review of its electoral laws in readiness for this year's presidential, parliamentary and local Government elections. Meanwhile, a new draft constitution is in the process of being made ready for enactment by Parliament.

Zambia would like to join those members that have commended the work that the Group of Friends has been doing in the peace process in the Great Lakes region. Zambia is aware and shares with the Group of Friends its understanding of the negatives encountered in the process. We want to encourage the Council, however, to see that the road to peace is not always peaceable in itself. Our experience in the fight for freedom for southern Africa in particular bears testimony to that. Let us therefore stand firm together. We are encouraged that the future holds great promise for the Great Lakes region. Let us turn those challenges into a greater vision for that area with such great potential for regional and world peace.

As we approach the second summit in Nairobi, which will launch the pact on security, stability and development, the participation of both the Group of Friends and the joint United Nations-African Union secretariat in Nairobi is bound to become more crucial and dependable. We would therefore appeal to the United Nations to continue to maintain its important role in the peace process not only by extending the presence of the joint United Nations-African Union

secretariat, but also by strengthening the administrative role of its staff in Nairobi.

The President: I give the floor to the Ambassador of South Africa to the Great Lakes region, His Excellency Mr. Kingsley Mamabolo.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): Allow me, Madam, to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We applaud the initiative you have taken to hold this open debate on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. We also take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Secretary-General and the Security Council for the various initiatives taken to address issues related to African conflicts. Those initiatives have led to tangible results and steady progress in conflict prevention and the establishment of peace, stability and security on the African continent.

Africa has, through the establishment of the Peace and Security Council, created an environment conducive to the establishment of a strong institutional partnership with the Security Council in the areas of international peace and security. South Africa is encouraged by the visible progress that the partnership between the United Nations and Africa has made in the areas of peace and security and urges the strengthening of that collaboration in terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. There is a need to create a structure that will enhance that institutional cooperation in order to ensure effective and coordinated action between the Security Council and the African Union's Peace and Security Council. It was in that understanding that we welcomed the Security Council's presidential statement on the institutional relationship with the African Union that was issued after their meeting in the Sudan in 2004.

Experience has shown us that cooperation with regional structures can enhance the maintenance of international peace and security. We believe that the result of this meeting should intensify collaboration between the Security Council and other important actors in the Great Lakes region, notably the International Conference on the Great Lakes, coordinated by the Special Representative, Ambassador Ibrahima Fall, as well as the African Union Peace and Security Council. We need to develop collaborative structures that could include the follow-up mechanism intended to assist in the implementation of the regional confidence-building mechanisms following the second summit of the International Conference.

The debate today should help us focus attention on the rapid progress being made in the situation in the Great Lakes. The progress that is being made through intraregional discussions is commendable, and South Africa believes that those discussions, not to mention the success that the decisions have achieved, contribute directly to the reduction of tensions in the region.

For example, the reduction of regional tensions is an important backdrop to the progress being made in the transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself. South Africa commends the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on its progress in voter registration. In addition, South Africa believes that the operational success of the constitutional referendum is an important indication that the preparations being made for the general election are effective.

That does not mean that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be able to surmount all the operational challenges that the referendum brought to light. The international community has been generous in the financial support provided to the electoral process. However, some of the pledged funds have not yet materialized, and we call on those that have pledged funds to make them available. South Africa, for its part, is planning to provide technical support, training and manpower to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to support the Independent Electoral Commission's operations in the field.

The Great Lakes region of Africa is on the threshold of establishing lasting peace. A lot of work has been accomplished. South Africa is especially pleased at the progress being made within the region to reduce those issues that cause tensions between the regional States. That progress includes, first, the recent agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda to deal with the elements of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that were active in Haut-Uele, Orientale Province, and the subsequent elimination of LRA activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, the recent agreement between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to permit the establishment of a Uganda Amnesty Commission

office in North Kivu will also contribute to the disarming and repatriation of Ugandan combatants.

Thirdly, the success of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in dealing with the Congolese Revolutionary Movement (MRC) elements active in Kilo and Mongwalu and the efforts by the Congolese Government, in cooperation with Uganda, to disarm and repatriate those MRC elements that relocated to Uganda are also commendable. However, there remain several issues of concern that have been addressed by the States of the region, albeit without success. For example, the continued presence of the Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda (FDLR) and Mai-Mai forces in the Kivus remains a serious threat to regional stability and the integrity of both the transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the regional security-sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes. The role of MONUC and the national army in identifying strongholds, and putting military pressure on those armed groups to join the DDR process is commendable. South Africa is involved in those operations under the command of MONUC and will continue to support those operations.

The death of eight MONUC soldiers from Guatemala demonstrates that more needs to be done to ensure stability in the region. In that context, South Africa urges States in the region to further strengthen their cooperation in ending the activities of illegal armed groups. We now have an opportunity to create a framework that will strengthen democracy, good governance, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, reconciliation and the participation of civil society, including women concerning issues of peace and security.

We look forward to the holding of the second Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region which will enhance the dialogue that has already been established among countries of the region, most of which had been engaged, not so long ago, in a bitter struggle against each other. The International Conference will also ensure that those countries own and are accountable for the peace process in the region, in order to cement post-conflict reconstruction and development.

In that regard, South Africa welcomes the establishment on 20 December 2005 of the Peacebuilding Commission. Clearly the Commission will have a significant role to play in many African countries, particularly in the Great Lakes region. Burundi, which is emerging from conflict and has successfully completed its peace process, should benefit greatly. The Peacebuilding Commission should constantly contribute to stabilizing the post-electoral phase of institution-building, reconstruction and development in both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan.

Madam President, we take the opportunity once again to commend you for holding this debate, which focuses attention on the importance of resolutions 1625 (2005), 1631 (2005) and 1649 (2005), and we implore the Security Council to further strengthen those instruments with the adoption of the draft resolution now being considered (S/2006/51).

The President: As 18 more speakers remain, I request once again that representatives limit their interventions to 5 minutes so that others may also intervene. I thank them for their understanding.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Said Djinnit, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union.

Mr. Djinnit: We are gratified that, at the initiative of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Security Council has decided to hold an open debate on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. Madam President, your initiative comes as no surprise to us at the African Union as we are fully aware of the long-standing commitment of your country to the issue of peace and security on the continent as a whole and of the laudable efforts it continues to invest in the promotion of peace, understanding and cooperation, in the Great Lakes region in particular.

I wish to pay special tribute to His Excellency Mr. Jakaya Kikwete who, as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tanzania, played a leading role in the efforts which culminated in the convening in Dar es-Salaam, on 20 November 2004, of the first Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. I cannot but seize this opportunity to renew to the United Republic of Tanzania our heartfelt congratulations on

the recently concluded peaceful elections held in that country resulting in the election of former Foreign Minister Kikwete as President of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Today's meeting provides us with an opportunity to take stock of the progress so far made in the initiative since the Dar es-Salaam Summit and to deliberate on the best ways and means to create the most propitious conditions for the convening of the second Summit, which is scheduled to be held in Nairobi in the course of this year.

It was in the same spirit of building momentum for the initiative that the Peace and Security Council of the African Union held, in Addis Ababa on 17 June 2005, its first-ever open session, which discussed the process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. On that occasion, the Peace and Security Council adopted a declaration in which it reiterated its strong support for the initiative and endorsed the decision of the Dar es-Salaam Summit declaring the region a special reconstruction and development zone accompanied by a special reconstruction fund.

It is encouraging to note that all the draft programmes of action, projects and protocols, and the document on the follow-up mechanism, have been prepared and are expected to be finalized during the forthcoming regional ministerial meeting scheduled to be held in Bangui in mid-February, thus paving the way for the adoption of the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact at the second Summit.

In addition to the progress in the preparation of the relevant documents, it is also encouraging to note that the regional political environment has improved since the last Summit, in Dar es-Salaam, as a result of the significant progress achieved in peace processes in the region on the one hand, and through existing verification and confidence-building mechanisms on the other. With respect to the progress in the peace processes, we welcome in particular the establishment of the post-transition Government in Burundi, the progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in January 2005 and, the successful holding of the referendum on the Constitution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, laying the basis for general elections by the end of June 2006 to conclude the transitional period.

For its part, the African Union, which is strongly backing the peace processes in the region, also undertook to contribute to the stabilization of the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the neutralization and disarmament of the various armed groups operating in the area, in particular, the members of the ex-Forces armées rwandaises (FAR) and Interahamwe. A reconnaissance mission was recently dispatched to the region and neighbouring countries, it consulted extensively with all stakeholders on the best ways to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo armed forces, in cooperation with the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), in neutralizing and disarming the armed groups. The outcome of the mission will be examined soon by the Peace and Security Council, which is expected to authorize our Commission to undertake the preparatory work that is necessary for the deployment of an African Union force, including the development of a concept of operation and the definition of the logistic and financial requirements.

At this juncture, it is worth recalling that the Organization of African Unity, which was closely associated with the development of the idea of convening an international conference on the Great Lakes region, endorsed the initiative in 1994. Since then, it has been working hand in hand with the United Nations in promoting the initiative. In the process, sustained efforts have been made to generate the necessary regional political support that was subsequently solemnly stated in the Dar es-Salaam Declaration.

In Dar es-Salaam, the leaders of the region also affirmed their ownership of the process, while the international community, and in particular the Group of Friends, pledged continued support. For its part, the African Union remains committed to supporting the countries of the region as they prepare for the second Summit, to be held in Nairobi, and during the implementation phase of the Pact. While expressing the African Union's appreciation to the Group of Friends for supporting the preparatory process of the Conference, I would like to call on its members to remain committed to the process beyond the Nairobi Summit.

Although the initial concept of the Conference was developed from a purely security perspective, it has since evolved to include democracy, good governance, economic development and regional integration, as well as humanitarian and social issues. That notwithstanding, security issues remain at the core of the underlying concerns of the initiative. In that respect, I believe that the initiative provides us with a unique opportunity to address a significant security challenge for the continent. Indeed, restoring peace and stability in a pivotal area of the continent, including three vast and wealthy countries, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, will undoubtedly have an important and positive impact on peace, security and economic development throughout the continent.

I would also like to underline that the Great Lakes initiative is a clear illustration of the new vision of the African Union, as embodied in its Constitutive Act, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and the Declaration of the Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa, recognizing the interlinkages between peace, security, democracy and development and calling for unity that is based not only on geography and common borders, but also on political will and common values.

On the basis of that vision, and inspired by the progress being made in promoting peaceful solutions to the various conflicts afflicting our continent, the African Union has recently embarked on the elaboration of a strategic framework for post-conflict reconstruction and development in Africa. Similarly, the recent establishment by the United Nations of the Peacebuilding Commission is a most welcome development, as it provides the international community with a unique instrument to assist countries emerging from conflict in their transition to reconstruction and development.

Finally, through the Great Lakes initiative, the countries of the region have recognized the value-added that such an initiative would bring to their individual efforts aimed at promoting peace, security, stability and development. They have committed themselves to owning the process and to mobilizing their resources to sustain the initiative.

At the same time, the continued political and financial support of the international community will be required so as to enable the countries of the region to implement the Security, Stability and Development Pact, to be adopted in Nairobi, in the spirit of partnership, which, together with the principle of ownership, has been guiding the process. I am confident that this Security Council meeting will send a strong and unequivocal message of encouragement and support for the initiative, given the important tasks and formidable challenges that lie ahead in the post-Nairobi phase of the initiative.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

Mr. Fall (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset, on behalf of the Secretary-General, to join previous speakers in expressing congratulations and gratitude to you, Madam President, for having taken the initiative to organize this important meeting, and to thank your country for the diligent and active manner in which it has been chairing the International Conference on the Great Lakes region.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2006/46), which it is my honour to introduce to the Council, follows up on his report to the Council of 17 November 2003 (S/2003/1099), in which the Secretary-General described the state of the preparatory process for the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Some important progress has been made in that process since November 2003, and the Council has been kept regularly informed, here at Headquarters and during visits on the ground. The most important advance, of course, was the holding of the first Summit of the Conference, at Dar es-Salaam in November 2004.

Furthermore, thanks to the momentum generated by the Conference process, the regional political dialogue that began in 2003 has continued to make progress. That regular framework for diplomatic, political and technical cooperation at the regional level has been conducive to the emergence and strengthening of a climate of trust among the countries members of the Conference, which has helped to facilitate the preparatory work for the second Summit — the Nairobi Summit — originally scheduled to take place in December 2005 but delayed until 2006 at the request of a country member of the Conference.

The first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference was successfully held at Dar es-Salaam on 19 and 20 November 2004, and marked the end of the first

phase of the process. The Dar es-Salaam Declaration was an important milestone for the region. It was the first comprehensive regional political document prepared jointly by Governments and non-governmental actors in which leaders offered a candid diagnosis of the ills of the region and agreed on a forward-looking regional vision of peace, security and development, formulating guiding principles and policy priorities on the four key themes of the Conference and charting a road map for the elaboration of a Security, Stability and Development Pact in the Great Lakes region, which is to be concluded during the second Summit.

In the Dar es-Salaam Declaration it was also decided to establish a mechanism for formulating action plans, protocols and specific, achievable and measurable projects. The mechanism has three components: a Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, a Regional Preparatory Committee, and technical thematic groups.

The Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, which will be led by Tanzania, which chairs the Conference process, until the holding of the second Summit, is made up of 11 member country ministers in charge of the organization of the conference — nine of whom have honoured us with their presence today in this Chamber — as well as of ministers from neighbouring co-opted countries, several of whom are also taking part in today's meeting. The Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee has met to shape, consider and approve the work of the Regional Preparatory Committee. It also liaises with the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region and the international community in general, using its good offices to resolve the most difficult questions relating to projects and protocols, prioritizing such protocols and action plans and mediating complex and sensitive political and diplomatic issues. The last meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee before the second Summit will take place in Bangui from 21 to 24 February 2006, during which priorities for the draft Pact will be finalized and adjusted.

The Regional Preparatory Committee is the executive body of the Conference. It coordinates the technical preparation of the action programmes, protocols and projects to be submitted to the second Summit. It is made up of the national coordinators of the 11 member countries, as well as of national representatives of women, youth and civil society, and submits its recommendations to the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee. The technical thematic clusters are the technical organs of the Conference, composed of experts from the Great Lakes region, assisted by experts from the United Nations system, the Group of Friends of the region and regional and subregional economic communities. Those experts are responsible for elaborating projects and protocols.

It is in that context that the joint secretariat of the Bureau of the African Union and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region is responsible for preparing, coordinating and ensuring follow-up on all mechanisms, operations, documents, meetings and other priority Conference activities and for implementing all of that in order to give substance to the Security, Stability and Development Pact by supporting the preparation and finalization of action plans, projects and selected priority protocols.

In that context, the Special Representative carries out political activities in support of member States, preventive diplomacy and confidence-building measures intended to preserve and strengthen the atmosphere of trust essential for continuing the Conference preparation process.

The region's countries have chosen a number of protocols and priority projects, which are combined in action plans corresponding to each of the Conference's four themes. The report submitted for members' consideration summarizes those priority documents.

With regard to peace and security, the protocol on non-aggression, mutual defence and peaceful resolution of conflict is emphasized. That protocol is accompanied by a series of priority projects, all of which are related to joint border security management based on an innovative security architecture that divides the Great Lakes region into 12 cross-border security zones. Those projects include the disarmament of armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the disarmament of farmers in border regions between the Sudan, Uganda and Kenya. A third project is related to managing the common border between Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. Those are specific and concrete border cooperation projects that combine State security with human security, and their implementation brings together governmental actors and local populations.

The other priority projects, in keeping with the Dar es-Salaam Declaration, seek to support, harmonize and strengthen the initiatives of existing regional mechanisms in areas such as combating the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, countering terrorism and trans-national crime, demining and combating anti-personnel mines.

In the area of democracy and good governance, the priority initiatives are based on the project for a regional centre to promote democracy, good governance, human rights and civic education. In addition, three protocols — on preventing crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, on combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources and on mutual cooperation — complete this picture.

With respect to economic development and regional integration, the priority projects include a mechanism for the certification of natural resources, which is the operational interface of the protocol on combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources; a regional microcredit project; the relaunching of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries; and a framework project establishing cross-border developmental zones to strengthen regionalism and development among States and border populations through cooperation initiatives concerning cross-border natural resources.

Other projects are related to the development of existing infrastructures, such as road, railway and river transport corridors. The one and only protocol concerns the specific zone for reconstruction and development, whose creation was announced by Conference member States in the Dar es-Salaam Declaration.

Finally, in the area of priority humanitarian and social issues, the projects focus on the pioneering protocols on protecting and assisting internally displaced persons, on the property rights of repatriated persons, on sexual violence against women and children and on humanitarian workers' access to populations in need. In addition, Conference actors have always sought to integrate, in a practical manner, the highly important cross-cutting themes of gender, HIV/AIDS, human rights, the environment and human settlements into the protocols and priority projects.

Once it has been signed, the Pact must be subjected to the test of implementation. To that end, the countries members of the Conference have planned to establish a simple regional follow-up mechanism, whose activities must be supported by the United Nations and the African Union. It is already agreed that its role will be to supervise the implementation of the Pact, to work to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts in the region and to maintain close working relationships with the regional and international institutions involved in implementing the Pact.

As the protocols and priority projects indicate, the draft Security, Stability and Development Pact for the Great Lakes region seeks to address the root causes of insecurity, conflict and instability in the region through an integrated regional approach and by emphasizing the links among the four themes of the Conference. These projects and protocols might have seemed numerous during the first phase of the Regional Preparatory Committee's work. However, on the basis of ministerial directives, the Committee subjected them to a rigorous priority-setting exercise at its meeting in Luanda in September 2005.

Here I should emphasize once again the close links that exist among the priority projects corresponding to each theme and among the projects corresponding to the four themes of the Conference, within the framework of an approach based on human security. As the Dar es-Salaam Declaration recalls, although poor governance, systematic violations of human rights, policies of discrimination, exclusion and political, social and economic marginalization or marginalization based on gender, the use of violence for conquering or conserving political power and impunity for crimes are all related to the theme of democracy and good governance, they are — together with the worsening of poverty, economic stagnation and the illegal exploitation of natural resources — among the major causative factors of the insecurity, conflicts and wars that have ravaged the region. Therefore, it might seem difficult to isolate and limit the Conference's sphere of action to addressing peace and security issues — although, chronologically speaking, the urgency of those issues naturally calls for priority and immediate action.

Participation from the outset by all the region's forces and by African subregional organizations and taking their concerns into consideration — a regional first at that level — enabled us to bring the entire region together in support of the Conference and to place the preparatory work under the seal of transparency, consensus and pragmatism. Moreover,

the entire United Nations family, including the missions in the region, and the lead agencies of the Conference's four themes are participating fully in the process.

Finally, the international community — mainly through the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region — has been the preferred partner of the Conference since it was established. The preparatory process has generated enthusiasm and hopes commensurate with the scope of the challenges to be met to pacify, stabilize and develop the region.

In that context, postponing the second Summit at the request of a member State has, despite the legitimacy of that request, affected the momentum of preparations for the second Summit, which had been scheduled for the end of 2005. It undermines the process, given the risk of that postponement being perceived as a lack of political will. It also increases the likelihood of the preparatory process's being disrupted and has unpredictable and significant financial implications.

It is therefore imperative that member States of the Conference agree on a date for the second Summit as soon as possible so as to demonstrate political will and maintain the process's momentum. They must continue to respect the letter and the content of the provisions of the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration.

The presence of those Ministers who are here today is undeniable proof of the importance that the countries of the Great Lakes region and their neighbours and partners attach to this process. But the international community is expecting to see other strong signals of a steadfast political and financial commitment at the highest levels of the member States of the Conference. That is a prerequisite if the Great Lakes region is to persuade the international community of its determination to transform the region into a zone of peace, security, stability and development, which would make it the first proving ground for the work of the new Peacebuilding Commission.

The ministerial meeting to be held at Bangui from 21 to 23 February 2006 will be an opportunity to take specific measures to normalize diplomatic relations and to implement a number of projects and protocols.

The report of the Secretary-General notes that the task of pacifying and stabilizing the region and promoting development there is an immense, but achievable, one. Largely as a result of the sustained work of the African Union and of the small team of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, significant progress has been made during the last two years of the process, following the last report of the Secretary-General, in developing concrete and realistic projects and in strengthening confidence among countries of the region.

We are nearing our goal. The Secretary-General believes, therefore, that the Council must continue to support the preparatory process of the Conference in general and the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in particular. Every effort should also be made to ensure the convening, as soon as possible, of the second Summit and the adoption of the Security, Stability and Development Pact. It will then be incumbent on the United Nations, on the basis of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's strategy of preventive diplomacy and with the support of the international community, and in cooperation with the African Union, to support and assist the region in the establishment of a regional follow-up mechanism and in the implementation of the Pact — the linchpin of the entire process. It is only through such an effort by the United Nations and on that basis that the Conference — to whose preparatory process the countries of the region and the international community have devoted so much effort — will yield dividends of peace, security, stability and development to the benefit of the peoples of the Great Lakes region, which have suffered so much.

That is the content of the recommendations with which the Secretary-General concludes the report that it has been my privilege to present to the Council.

Allow me to conclude on a personal note. The Great Lakes region, in its current configuration, encompasses the States of central Africa, of eastern Africa and of southern Africa — three of the five regions of Africa — which means that bringing peace, security, stability and development to the region will make a fundamental contribution to ensuring that the same process takes place on the African continent as a whole.

Mr. De Rivero (Peru) (spoke in Spanish): Over the last 50 years, in the countries of the Great Lakes

region, especially in those where conflicts have broken out, per-capita income has decreased and the population has continued to grow. The result has been the widespread pauperization of the peoples of the countries of the Great Lakes region in which conflicts have arisen. Indeed, roughly 80 per cent of people in those countries live on less than $2 a day. There has been no growth of a middle class but, rather, impoverishment and an absence of development.

That process of impoverishment has taken place against a backdrop of considerable natural wealth which has benefited only businesses and autocratic Governments. In recent years, due to the explosive population growth and to the ensuing social demands, those infrastructures collapsed, resulting in the disintegration of the social fabric of those countries and in the emergence of fratricidal struggles among illegal armed groups which have been, and are still, trying to appropriate the countries' natural resources for themselves.

Against that backdrop of conflicts among illegal armed groups over the ownership of natural resources, continuing population growth and a poverty rate of 80 per cent, it is very difficult — let us be candid here — to ensure the sustainability of democracy. Please do not misunderstand: the electoral processes aimed at rebuilding those countries are indispensable in order to give legitimacy to national reconstruction in those countries. However, they cannot suffice in a context of social disintegration.

We have to acknowledge that, thus far, in the Great Lakes region we have been building democracies on weak and fragile foundations. For those reasons, many post-conflict transitions are but the early stages of fragile democratic crises.

The primary task in land of democracy in the Great Lakes region is to be considered sustainable is arguably to administer what one might call "international economic shelter care" to those countries where electoral processes have taken place or where they are about to be undertaken. We must forgive those countries' debt, increase official assistance, give them access to markets without reciprocity, and ensure that the international private sector, in the wake of the Secretary-General's Compact, invests in those countries and modernizes their primary economies in order to ensure their competitive integration into the global economy. We have to understand that democracy is not sustainable when nearly 80 per cent of the population is poor and when it is surrounded by rich natural resources that are in the hands of illegal armed groups. Moreover, the region's natural resources by themselves cannot help those countries emerge from their poverty. The main feature of underdevelopment is to have natural resources and to export commodities, which historically bring low prices, impeding development.

The greatest international economic initiatives cure in the Great Lakes region must be focused on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is the strategic epicentre of the entire region. Without stability in that country, we will not have stability, peace or democracy in the region. In order to build peace and democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we need a robust United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) that would deter and dissolve the illegal armed groups. We also need a national armed force that would centralize the use of force, a well-trained police force that would provide security for its citizens and, lastly, a State that would be in a position to provide basic public services. Today the Democratic Republic of the Congo sometimes cannot cover, from its budget, basic public services such as health, education and, above all, civil security. In these conditions, stability and democracy could revert to crises in the Great Lakes.

Here, I would like to pay tribute to the Blue Helmets who have sacrificed their lives, and in particular to the Guatemalan peacekeepers who were ambushed a few days ago by the Lord's Resistance Army. Such events show that the Security Council must closely follow developments regarding these illegal groups, especially the Lord's Resistance Army, which has ravaged northern Uganda and which has a presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in southern Sudan. My delegation will give due attention to proposals that may be made with a view to bringing pressure to bear on these armed groups.

Likewise, we have to be especially vigilant when it comes to the sanctions regime, to enable the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of MONUC — and above all of neighbouring States — to control its territory, as well as land and air access, to prevent the smuggling of arms and natural resources. We should consider whether MONUC could also have

a regional mandate to address security needs at the borders.

No democracy can be sustained in the Great Lakes region without basic economic viability. Hence, natural resources should once again be under the jurisdiction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so that the new Government to be elected next June will have the resources to govern.

The matter of national reconstruction in the countries of the Great Lakes region must be tackled in a comprehensive fashion. We must promote democracy and organize elections. But at the same time we have to provide urgent international economic intensive care in order to begin to reduce poverty, which, I repeat, affects 80 per cent of the population. I know that this is a major challenge but, as I said, democracies are not sustainable without basic economic viability and social peace.

For these reasons, Peru supports the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact for the Great Lakes region. We believe that the International Conference on the Great Lakes should be convened without delay, and we hope that the recently established Peacebuilding Commission will include security and development in the Great Lakes region as one of the priority issues on its agenda.

Mr. Yamamoto (United States of America): Madam President, the United States commends you and your Government, the United Republic of Tanzania, for your important work on the draft resolution on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region (S/2006/51).

The United States applauds the critical work of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, and we share with the new United Nations Peacebuilding Commission a commitment to sustain political and economic development for fragile States.

We stand in solidarity with Ambassador Swing, General Gaye, General Cammaert and the men and women who courageously and heroically serve in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

To the people of Guatemala and to the families of the Guatemalan forces who paid the ultimate sacrifice, we extend our prayers and condolences, and, above all, our gratitude for their service. We also honour those innocent victims who have died and continue to die in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda each and every day.

We deplore the violence and condemn the hostilities of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Lord's Resistance Army, the Forces nationales de libération and other negative forces and militias that continue to operate in the Great Lakes region.

For over a decade now, the FDLR and those negative forces have remained a threat. How many more years must be wait? How much longer must we stand witness to the continued violence and threats from these negative forces? We also stand witness to the devastation and human suffering caused by the negative forces, armed groups and militias. Over 425,000 refugees, and a larger number of internally displaced persons, underscore for each of us the unfinished task that lies before us in the Great Lakes region.

The United States commends in the highest terms the Governments and the peoples of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda for their faith, trust, dedication and commitment to working together in the Tripartite Plus One Commission. Each of those four countries are making a difference, not only for their own people, but also in preparing a more secure and prosperous Great Lakes region. We also extend our appreciation for the support this has received from our colleagues in the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations.

Let me underscore to Council members the commitment of the United States to the goal of peace and security in the Great Lakes region and throughout Africa. We call on the Council to continue to invigorate its leadership and cooperation in ensuring a peaceful and secure Democratic Republic of the Congo after the elections this year and a new and vibrant Burundi, and to support the struggles against the negative forces that Rwanda faces each and every day, as well as the struggles and challenges faced by Uganda. We should all stand together, working together, to face the needs of the refugees and the internally displaced persons in the Great Lakes area. Let us renew our efforts and dedicate them to those endeavours.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): Allow me first of all to welcome you, Madam, and to thank you for taking the initiative of convening today's debate, the interest and

importance of which are such that we have heard from more than 10 ministers from Africa and, altogether, 14 ministers from various countries.

Greece fully associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union. Nevertheless, I would like to add some comments.

The region of the Great Lakes has been the scene of recurrent ethnic violence and interrelated crises in recent years that have on many occasions challenged the international community's capacity for crisis response and management.

The Rwandan genocide of 1994 had a destabilizing effect throughout the region. Civil war has devastated the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ethnic warfare in Burundi has tormented the country since its independence, resulting in waves of refugees and displaced persons. The situation in northern Uganda has had repercussions for the neighbouring countries.

However, in recent years, considerable, albeit painstaking improvements have taken place. Those include a remarkable national reconciliation in Rwanda, a successful organization of the referendum in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and an overwhelming approval of the new constitution, peaceful and democratic elections in Burundi, a bright example that led to the election of a new president and Government, and the weakening of the Lord's Resistance Army and the issuing of indictments to its leaders by the International Criminal Court.

Despite the existence of peace agreements among the different contending parties, their implementation is far from self-sustaining. The countries of the area, as well as the international community, have gradually realized that achieving peace, stability, security and development in the Great Lakes region will entail a strong regional dimension.

Indeed, over the past five years, the progress made by Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo owes much to regional diplomatic efforts, such as the Tripartite Plus Commission, as well as to concerted multilateral efforts, culminating in the signing on 20 November 2004 of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration of Principles on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region.

The African Union-United Nations International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is not an event, but a regional process based on confidence-building measures, parallel efforts in security and development, and addressing common problems in synergy. We fully support it and believe it to be of critical importance to the area.

We firmly believe that the upcoming Nairobi summit should continue along that regional approach. Long-term peace and stability in the region can be attained only on the basis of a genuine commitment by all the countries to respect territorial integrity and national sovereignty and to the peaceful resolution of outstanding issues. Conflicts and instability in each of the Great Lakes countries, as well as military incursions, endanger peace and stability in the region as a whole and seriously compromise national efforts for peace, security and development.

In both formal and informal consultations, Greece has stressed time and time again that security sector reform, in conjunction with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, together with concerted efforts to establish an environment of rule of law, are essential to creating the necessary circumstances in which peace can prevail.

We have expressed our support for the Dar es-Salaam Declaration, which provides a solid framework for the elaboration of a security, stability and development pact to be adopted at the second summit in Nairobi. We are convinced that the International Conference process represents a genuine platform for consolidating and enhancing regional peace without creating cumbersome and overlapping follow-up mechanisms.

We firmly believe that, in the light of those efforts, we should persevere along the same lines. In particular, besides following closely the transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, the Security Council could also focus on the regional context by better assisting in the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement of ex-combatants, as well as by improving the monitoring and strict implementation of the arms embargo, especially in respect of small arms. It should also direct peacekeeping operations to pay special attention to strengthening border security.

The United Nations system in general, including the Peacebuilding Commission that, hopefully, will

soon be put into action, should also concentrate on facilitating solutions to several key issues for the region, such as combating the illegal exploitation of natural resources. In that respect, we are ready to support proposals for special mechanisms, taking into account such existing initiatives as the Kimberly Process for diamonds and the European Union Action Plan on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade for illegal logging.

We firmly believe that ending impunity in the Great Lakes region will contribute to the promotion of peace and stability there. In that respect, we would like to emphasize the central role that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Court can play in bringing to justice those responsible for serious violations of human rights, war crimes and crimes against humanity. In addition, a national accountability mechanism should be actively supported. The aforementioned elements are included in the draft resolution prepared by Tanzania, for which we are grateful and which we will be supporting.

I would like to close by stating that Greece will continue to support the peace process in the Great Lakes region, both within the European community and bilaterally, to the benefit and prosperity of the peoples of the area and of permanent stability in the region.

The President: I call on the representative of Australia.

Ms. Lisson (Australia): I should first like to thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to address the Security Council, and to thank Tanzania for convening today's debate at such a crucial point along the road to the restoration of a secure environment in the Great Lakes region.

The progress in the peace processes in the Great Lakes region in recent times demonstrates what can be achieved through cooperation and coordinated regional and international efforts. Australia congratulates Burundi on having moved successfully to government by democratically elected representatives. We further applaud the steps already taken by the Democratic Republic of the Congo towards achieving that goal. The successful staging of the recent constitutional referendum augurs well for the forthcoming general elections.

However, security and the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region remain of concern to the international community. The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, briefed the Council last month on the serious and growing threat to regional peace and security wrought by the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army in the southern Sudan, northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those activities have brought suffering and instability to the region and displaced millions of innocent people.

Peace within the Great Lakes region cannot be attained while militant groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army are rampant. We therefore call upon the Lord's Resistance Army to cease its acts of violence and to cooperate fully with the international community and regional countries to end the conflict. We further encourage the three Governments concerned to work to promote regional solutions.

While Australia's main focus of humanitarian activity is our own Asia-Pacific region, Australia has assisted those affected people of northern Uganda with donations administered through the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme. Last year, Australia made $2 million available through the World Food Programme to assist displaced people living in camps in northern Uganda. We have also contributed towards regional stability through the deployment of 15 Australian Defence Force personnel to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). In the near future, 10 Australian Federal Police officers will also be deployed to UNMIS.

Australia welcomes the recent decision to establish a United Nations Peacebuilding Commission. We support a stronger and more coordinated role for the United Nations in assisting fragile States to negotiate the peacebuilding process. We particularly support better coordination among the various United Nations actors on the ground in post-conflict countries. In the context of the current debate on the Great Lakes region, we envisage that the Commission will be able to assist regional countries and regional organizations in pursuit of their goals.

Finally, Australia encourages the Council to remain seized of the security and humanitarian issues facing the Great Lakes region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Tunisia.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to commend you and your fraternal country, the United Republic of Tanzania, on the excellent manner in which you are conducting the presidency of the Security Council this month. I wish also to thank you for the initiative to convene this open debate, which enables States Members of the Organization to participate in the Security Council's deliberations on how to improve the effectiveness of its approach to this issue of its action to bring stability to the Great Lakes region.

Tunisia is pleased to note the Council's renewed interest in this subject, which can help in formulating a comprehensive approach to the resolution of the security and development issues that are of such urgency in the region. In that context, we welcome the November 2005 Council mission to countries of the region and express our support for the conclusions it reached.

We hail the wisdom of the approach advocated by the Tanzanian presidency of the Security Council with respect to addressing these issues in a regional context. We fully endorse that approach, particularly since, during our term on the Council in 2000-2001, we sponsored such an approach. Indeed, mindful of the close links among the various conflicts in the Great Lakes region, Tunisia called in the Council for the adoption of a comprehensive and regional approach to this matter. Moreover, the President of the Republic of Tunisia, His Excellency Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, proposed the idea of an international conference on the Great Lakes region, to be held under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union, as the appropriate forum for the comprehensive consideration of regional issues.

Tunisia attaches the highest importance to the prevention of conflict in Africa through improved cooperation and coordination among United Nations bodies, programmes and specialized agencies, the international financial institutions and the international community at large aimed at addressing the political, social and economic root causes of conflict in Africa. Let me note also that the end of a peacekeeping mission does not necessarily mark the establishment of sustainable peace. Such a peace can be ensured only by laying the political, economic and social foundations needed for long-term peacebuilding. The international community bears the political and moral duty to work together to that end. The Peacebuilding Commission, whose establishment was decided upon at the September 2005 world summit, should provide a key framework for such action.

Both in conflict prevention and in peacebuilding, cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, under Chapter VIII of the Charter, is of the greatest importance. Tunisia wishes therefore to reaffirm its interest in cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, particularly aimed at improving the Union's institutional capacities.

In the Great Lakes region today there are more than 20,000 Blue Helmets from a number of African troop-contributing countries, including my country. Africa's efforts to exercise ownership merit increased support from the United Nations and the international community. The establishment of the African Union Peace and Security Council with a view to setting regional conflict-prevention policies will certainly assist the African States concerned. But efforts to strengthen the peacekeeping capacity of African countries must be accompanied by efforts by the international community in the context of the collective obligations mandated by the Charter, which gives the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Tunisia once again calls on the international community, and especially on donor countries, to provide generous humanitarian and economic assistance to countries in the Great Lakes region. This would make it possible for the peoples concerned to enjoy the peace dividend. It is in the interest of those peoples to view the current page in the history of the Great Lakes region as belonging to the past: a page that is now being irreversibly turned to reveal a commitment to finding peaceful solutions to remaining problems, and to doing so in a constructive and cooperative spirit and in the framework of a comprehensive, multidimensional regional approach.

Tunisia is proud of belonging to Africa, and it has steadily taken action on its vigorous commitment to African causes and to peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. My country has participated, and is participating, in many peacekeeping missions in the region, and we are prepared to continue to do so, within our means. My country is also prepared to share

with countries of the region our experience in the spheres of economic and social development in the stages of emergence from conflict and of rebuilding.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to read out a statement by Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The statement reads as follows:

> "I wish at the outset to express the appreciation of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the important initiative taken by the brotherly United Republic of Tanzania in convening this meeting during its presidency of the Security Council. Egypt's appreciation is based on its great interest in the cause of security, peace, development and democracy in the Great Lakes region. That region is a strategic centre and the cornerstone of security in the African continent and its subregions and of Egypt's national security.
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> "The leaders of the Great Lakes region outlined their vision for the future of their region in the Dar es-Salam Declaration of November 2004. They reaffirmed their commitment to ownership of their future. They also emphasized their awareness of the need for genuine international support for national and regional efforts aimed at meeting the aspirations of all African peoples for a better future, a future of integrated, mutually reinforcing peace, security and democracy based on Africa's own priorities. To that end, Egypt is convinced that this vision must remain the primary framework for all efforts to achieve peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.
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> "It is based on that conviction and on Egypt's sense of responsibility towards the Great Lakes region that I will focus my statement on a number of ideas pertaining to the institutional aspects of collective international and regional action to define the modalities of a comprehensive approach to peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. I have been guided in this regard by the concept paper previously distributed by the Tanzanian presidency.
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> "First, in order to effectively address the priority issues in the Great Lakes region, we will need increasing institutional integration. To that end, we need to enhance the roles and tasks performed by all relevant parties in implementing the collective vision of the countries of the region based on their own strategic priorities for security and development. It is evident that we need more coherence among the various institutions and bodies involved in the region. The Security Council should perform its role, consistent with its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, through its mandates for peacekeeping missions in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Meanwhile, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union should perform its role as the primary regional body concerned with continental security. The relationship between the two bodies must be governed by the provisions of Chapter VIII of the Charter and guided by the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 1631 (2005). In that context, Egypt welcomes the development of a consultative institutional mechanism between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council, including by exchanging visits and holding ongoing periodic consultations on most relevant peace and security issues for Africa.
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> "However, our experience indicates that peace in the Great Lakes region cannot be confined to its conventional political and security aspects. Rather, we need a more comprehensive approach that takes account of socio-economic and development aspects, which contribute to promoting and sustaining security. These fall within the purview of other United Nations bodies, programmes and specialized agencies, which together constitute an integrated system for dealing with the major socio-economic needs of the African States in general, in particular during the post-conflict phase. That inclusive vision should be implemented by those bodies and programmes, in cooperation with their counterparts in the African Union, through quick-impact projects on the ground, which can provide an immediate peace dividend for the peoples in question, contrasted with the negative effect of war and conflict.

"Secondly, the operationalization of the Peacebuilding Commission is closely linked to the realization of such a comprehensive approach to peace, as that body could serve as a unique institutional focal point for the coordination of international and regional efforts in support of the transition from conflict to reconstruction and development. There is no doubt that the Peacebuilding Commission will focus directly on States emerging from conflict in the Great Lakes region, in particular Burundi, where genuine cooperation is needed between the national Government and the United Nations, based on the priorities currently being developed by the Government, and with which the necessary support of the international community. The Peacebuilding Commission must also focus the necessary attention to and mobilize international support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo as the current transition period comes to an end. The Peacebuilding Commission is expected to help countries emerging from conflict in the Great Lakes region to implement the provisions of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration and other regional and international initiatives aimed at addressing multifaceted cross-border challenges in the post-conflict environment. That can be accomplished only by deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the United Nations, the African Union and the countries of the Great Lakes region.

"In this context, I would like to reiterate the firm position that Egypt expressed during the consultations preceding the adoption of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the establishment and operationalization of the Peacebuilding Commission. It is important that any international peacebuilding effort respect and reinforce the concept of national ownership of such efforts as a primary condition for success in order to maximize the benefits of any type of external support. In this connection, I would like also to recall that Egypt presented its candidature for membership in the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission on the basis of its conviction that the Committee is an important forum through which Egypt can support peace and stability in Africa and other regions of the world.

"Thirdly, the key to any breakthrough in the situation in the Great Lakes region is to focus on a number of critical issues relating to conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding, including by encouraging confidence-building among the Governments of the region, capacity-building in the area of border management and monitoring, establishing effective channels of communication and information exchange among national authorities and coordinating programmes for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and for the return and resettlement of internally displaced persons. Other measures that need to be addressed as a matter of priority include security-sector reform, which is the key to the extension of a State's authority throughout its territory, in keeping with the social characteristics of the region.

"In this context, I would like to emphasize that the international community should adopt a unified vision with respect to breaking the link between the illegal exploitation of natural resources and armed conflict in the Great Lakes region and eradicating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. To that end, Egypt is of the view that the elements contained in General Assembly resolution 60/223, on the causes of conflict in Africa, and those in Security Council resolution 1625 (2005), relating to the prevention of armed conflict, particularly in Africa, together constitute an important conceptual framework that should be duly complemented by the adoption of measures focusing the attention of the international community on addressing the causes of conflict in the Great Lakes region, in keeping with the preliminary steps adopted by the Security Council in resolution 1649 (2005) aimed at countering the threat posed by foreign armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in addition to other measures formulated and supported by the African Union.

"In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to call on all relevant parties in the region to take the measures necessary to halt the cross-border attacks perpetrated by all armed groups, particularly the attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army and by the Forces

démocratiques de libération du Rwanda on Ugandan and Rwandan territory, respectively.

"Finally, I would like to assure the Council that Egypt will spare no effort in promoting international and regional efforts to achieve peace and stability, in the most comprehensive sense, in the Great Lakes region. Egypt is committed to working through all the relevant bodies and mechanisms of the African Union and the United Nations on the basis of our deep sense of loyalty to Africa, our historical commitment to its peoples and our faith in the unity of purpose and destiny of the continent."

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choi Young-jin (Republic of Korea): I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having convened this open debate and for having circulated a concept paper on the subject under discussion.

I would like also to express my delegation's condolences on the loss of eight Guatemalan peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Monday.

The Great Lakes region has for decades been the scene of many violent conflicts, reaching an unprecedented crisis in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Over the past year, however, peace processes in the region have made significant progress. In Burundi, a new Government was established through peaceful and democratic elections, concluding that country's transitional period. Meanwhile, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a referendum on the draft constitution was held successfully, creating a solid foundation for the elections to be held this year.

Despite those positive political developments, the region is still faced with daunting challenges. Burundi needs to further consolidate peace and reconciliation. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is critical that free and democratic elections be held before the end of the transitional period in June. In addition, foreign armed groups operating in that country must be disarmed and repatriated to their home countries.

In our view, there are three issues that are most relevant to the achievement of durable peace, security and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region: taking a regional approach; focusing on the peacebuilding process; and addressing the root causes of the conflicts.

First, conflicts in the Great Lakes region need to be seen from more of a regional perspective. The people of the Great Lakes region are ethnically, culturally and linguistically interlinked, which means that an insecure situation in one country directly affects other countries in the region. For example, foreign armed groups operating in one country threaten the security not just of that country but of neighbouring countries as well, because they operate across borders. Accordingly, ensuring peace and security in one country necessitates close cooperation with its neighbours.

We believe that regional problems can be best resolved through regional organizations, which have comparative advantages in leading peace processes at the community level. In that regard, we welcome the increasing assumption of responsibility and leadership by the African Union (AU) in maintaining peace and security in Africa, playing a role that is complementary to United Nations efforts. We urge that the cooperation between the United Nations and the AU be further developed and institutionalized.

Secondly, peace and security in the Great Lakes region requires a focus not just on peacemaking and peacekeeping, but also on peacebuilding efforts. Even after a new Government is established through democratic elections, a country emerging from conflict is likely to remain fragile for some time because of the many challenges it faces, such as strengthening national institutions and eradicating poverty. The abrupt disengagement of the international community at that stage can trigger the re-emergence of conflicts. Burundi, for example, is currently at that stage, which means that peacebuilding efforts must be pursued vigorously in the coming years. In that regard, we look forward to the early operationalization of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Thirdly, alongside those short- and medium-term approaches, it is critical to address the root causes of conflicts in order to prevent their recurrence and maintain durable peace over the long term. These root causes include chronic extreme poverty, a fragile private sector, a lack of strong national institutions based on the rule of law and good governance, and the prevailing impunity. Although peaceful resolution of conflict is crucial, it is far better to prevent conflicts in

advance. In that regard, it is necessary that the countries in the region implement long-term economic and social development strategies, with the assistance of the international community.

The Republic of Korea has actively joined in international efforts to assist the implementation of development strategies by African countries. We plan to double our official development assistance by 2009. With that increased aid, we will step up our efforts to support African countries — including those of the Great Lakes region — in addressing the root causes of conflict and achieving sustainable development, with a focus on the fields of medical services, human resource development and information technology. For this year, we will provide $3.4 million for development projects in the Great Lakes region. In addition, we welcome opportunities to share with African countries our experiences in implementing successful development strategies and in strengthening good governance.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Yousfi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your wise and enlightened guidance of the work of the Security Council during the month of January. I also congratulate your delegation on the judicious choice of topic for today's open debate.

In addition, I should like to express my Government's condolences to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and to the Government of Guatemala following the recent attack that claimed the lives of eight peacekeeping soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Dar es-Salaam Declaration clearly identified the causes of the endemic conflicts and persistent insecurity in the region — particularly economic stagnation and the worsening of poverty. It also clearly identified the dangers threatening the region, such as the lack of a regional strategy for disarming and repatriating foreign combatants, the illegal circulation of small arms, the situation of refugees and displaced persons and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Above all, it emphasized the will of the countries concerned to face those dangers with determination.

The Rwanda genocide in 1994, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Gatumba massacre in Burundi in August 2004 are examples — there is no better proof — of the repercussions that internal crises can have on neighbouring countries and of the need for a regional approach to conflict prevention and settlement. We believe that such an approach must give priority to the root causes of conflicts and stress the promotion of national reconciliation, economic and social development, good governance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights.

The successful outcome of the transition period in Burundi and the preparations for the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are encouraging signs for the return of peace and stability in the region. Credit is due primarily to the countries of the region, which have been able to rise above their differences and to work together on an approach that favours dialogue, cooperation and peaceful settlement of disputes. However, challenges must still be addressed in order to let peace and security take root in a lasting manner and to forever dispel the spectre of the conflicts that have afflicted this part of the continent.

Burundi continues to face obstacles to security with the refusal of the Forces nationales de libération to endorse the peace process and economic and social constraints worsened by the pressure of returning refugees and displaced persons. The people's support for the Government's political programme depends largely on the fulfilment of the promises for national reconciliation, for the combating of impunity, for democracy and for power-sharing.

Burundi will need assistance and support from the international community to overcome those difficulties and to avoid plunging once again into instability. The case of that country could be referred as a priority to the just-created Peacebuilding Commission, which could constitute an excellent framework for cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the peacebuilding process.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the tension prevailing in the eastern part of the country attests to the risks threatening the peaceful conclusion of the transition period. The presence of foreign armed groups is a source of concern with regard to the security of civilian populations and a source of tension among the region's countries. The absence of State authority throughout the territory and the lack of a truly united, integrated and properly equipped national

army have facilitated cross-border movements of weapons and combatants and have encouraged the continued illegal exploitation of natural resources, which finances weapons trafficking, in violation of the arms embargo.

The measures established by resolution 1649 (2005) can accelerate the process of disarmament and of repatriating foreign combatants, and regional mechanisms such as the Tripartite Plus One Joint Commission should help restore confidence and reduce the tension among the countries of the region. We pay tribute to MONUC and to the United Nations Operation in Burundi for accomplishing their mandates and for their efforts to re-establish confidence among and the protection of the region's civilian populations.

Respect for national sovereignty and for the inviolability of borders and the establishment of good-neighbourly relations constitute the foundations for a regional security framework that the countries of the region must define. We hope that the objectives of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration and its action plans and programmes — a Security, Stability and Development Pact for the Great Lakes region — will be attained at the second Summit, planned for Nairobi, and that it will be adopted as the approach to peacebuilding in the region.

Finally, we salute the role played by the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region and by other partners, as well as the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, in organizing this Conference. We hope to see the international community continue and intensify its multiform aid — particularly financial aid — to enable us to hold the Nairobi Summit soon and to ensure the success we seek.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Senegal, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (spoke in French): Mr. President, I should like first to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January and to express to you my delegation's gratitude for your laudable and timely initiative in organizing a public debate on the question of peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region.

Your initiative is particularly welcome given that this region has for some months now, following a lengthy period of upheaval, been experiencing a positive trend towards peace and accord. This was highlighted by the holding in November 2004 in Dar-es-Salaam of the first Summit of Heads of State and Governments of the International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region — an area whose stability is vital to the entire African continent.

For that reason, my country, Senegal, which has been following developments related to that Conference with great interest, was extremely pleased at the Declaration that emanated from it, which reminded the leaders of the Great Lakes region that their people share a common fate and that they have a responsibility jointly to overcome the demons of division and, in a spirit of solidarity, to build together, in a climate of confidence, calm and good-neighbourliness, the future of their peoples, which are linked by strong ethnic, cultural and linguistic ties.

The impressive momentum that led to that welcome must not be allowed to fade, because declarations of good intentions are not enough; action must be taken quickly to ensure that the commitments outlined in the Declaration in the priority areas of peace, solidarity, security, democracy and governance, economic development and regional integration, and humanitarian and social issues are translated into concrete achievements. That is not the task of the Governments and the peoples of the Great Lakes region alone; it must be the result of a joint, agreed initiative whose success will require a major contribution on the part of the development partners. Hence my delegation hopes that the Great Lakes region will enjoy the support of donor countries, particularly those of the Group of Eight, whose next Summit, held at Gleneagles in July 2005, gives reason to hope to those African countries that are faced with a myriad of difficulties.

The continued support of the international community for the normalization process in the region is critical. It should not lose sight of the strategic importance of the second Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes region, which, we hope, will take place this year.

During the next stage, where protocols and programmes of action will be adopted, it will be important to apply the concept of specific cases for reconstruction, as set out by my compatriot Minister

Ibrahima Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, to whom I convey my fraternal regards. That concept respects the geopolitical realities of the Great Lakes region insofar as it integrates two forms of cooperation: local territorial cooperation in all sectors, with the possibility of the joint management of border resources, and a partnership-based cooperation with a strong interlinkage between all segments of the population, including youth movements, women's groups, civil society and so on.

That project will remain utopian, however, if it does not receive significant financial support to finance the specific reconstruction fund, which is aimed at supporting activities in the specific zones for reconstruction in the region.

My delegation believes also that it is important to consolidate, at the State level, what has been achieved in terms of good governance, democracy, public, human rights and the rule of law, as set out in resolution 1625 (2005). That is a political imperative because each internal conflict that results from a failure to respect these principles risks becoming a transnational conflict with often disastrous consequences.

Finally, it is more urgent than ever before to develop regional early-warning capacities in order to identify, in a timely manner, threats to peace and stability in the region and to take the appropriate measures. Of course, such a mechanism should also be accompanied by active preventive diplomacy measures, whose role would be to advocate peace and to resolve disagreements between political actors or groups within or among States.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I cannot but reiterate my pride at your initiative in having convened this public debate and at the leadership and dedication of Tanzania, a fraternal and friendly country, in the process of promoting peace and shared prosperity in the Great Lakes region, an area of the African continent that is so dear to all its sons and daughters.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of the Central African Republic, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Poukre-Kono (Central African Republic) (spoke in French): The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and Francophonie of the Central African Republic, Mr. Jean-Paul Ngoupandé, has asked me to apologize for not being able to be present at this meeting of the Security Council on the Great Lakes region. He wishes it every success.

My duties permit and welcome the initiative to convene, at the request of the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, this meeting of the Security Council, at the ministerial level, to assess the significant progress made since the preparatory bodies of the International Conference on the African Great Lakes region became operational and, at the same time, to set out in the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration of 20 November 2004, to move forward towards the achievement of a common vision that will transform the region into a space of sustainable peace and security, political and social stability and shared growth and development — a space of cooperation based on joint strategies and policies within the framework of a common destiny. I should like here to pay tribute to the commitment of the Government of Tanzania, within the Security Council, to seeing that the major decisions of the Council are translated into reality — the goal of the draft resolution that is before us for adoption.

The Central African delegation also welcomes the dialogue initiated by the United Nations, which placed the issue of the Great Lakes region under a specialized office headed by Mr. Ibrahima Fall, whose commitment is beyond doubt.

At least 7 of the 11 countries in the area have gone through the horrors of armed conflicts that had their origins in diverse factors including recurrent intercultural wars, endemic poverty, chronic underdevelopment, power struggles, and others. In varying degrees, these countries are benefiting from post-conflict programmes, but the economic and strategic stakes in the Great Lakes region, which is rich and teeming with natural resources that are illicitly exploited and plundered, have placed the region at the centre of the interest of the United Nations.

The serious human and social consequences of these crises and armed conflicts are shown by the large number of refugees and displaced persons throughout the Great Lakes region, and by the endemic poverty.

Peace, security and development are closely linked. No crisis is limited to a single country, because of the direct or indirect effects on neighbouring countries. As we can see in some countries, political

stability and good governance can ensure sustainable development and prosperity, which can end the suffering of thousands of people wandering through the countryside, seeking security. With determination, the Great Lakes countries must overcome their inertia and give hope to their suffering peoples by acting on the sacred principle of human dignity.

Furthermore, the issue of humanitarian assistance should not be the subject of lengthy debate, because what is needed is to rapidly provide assistance to human beings. The consolidated appeal for refugees and displaced persons should not be held up in any way.

The principles of the peaceful settlement of disputes between States and good-neighbourly relations should prevail during the ongoing consultations on adopting an integrated, comprehensive strategy for these policies. To do this, the Central African Republic supports the proposal to adopt two protocols to strengthen security cooperation among the States in the region: a regional non-aggression pact and a regional protocol on good-neighbourliness. This option of dialogue between States could lead to reliable regional reconstruction projects.

When we talk about reconstruction, we are talking about funding. Now that the co-Saharan Summit has declared the Great Lakes region a reconstruction and development zone to be accompanied by a specific fund, the countries concerned are aware of their primary responsibility to contribute to assembling those funds. However, we must not forget that most of those countries emerging from sometimes acute conflicts, which harmed their economic structures, are experiencing great difficulties in mobilizing.

At the world summit held during the seventh session of the General Assembly last autumn, His Excellency General François Bozizé, President of the Central African Republic, therefore launched an appeal for solidarity. He said that "in the face of the globalization of every kind that may be encountered by Member States, large or small, solidarity must remain the key word". (A/S-7/PV.3, p. 7).

The historic link engagement of the Central African Republic in this geographic space rightly in security, geo-strategic, economic and humanitarian concerns. We have a more than 1,800-kilometre border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have welcomed more than 20,000 Rwandan, Burundian and Congolese refugees during the crisis in the Great Lakes region. We have commercial relations across the Congo-Ubangui river with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with the Congo. These trade relations were severely upset by the 1997 war, the second in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which affected export products such as coffee and palm oil. The Central African Republic's fuel shortages in 1999 contributed to the breakdown of our economy, much of which had been stricken by the destruction of industrial infrastructure since 1996. In 1994, the Bangui-Mpoko airport provided an airbase for the French Operation Turquoise, which was mandated to restore peace to Rwanda. The intervention in the Central African Republic from 2001 to 2003 by troops from the former rebellion of Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of the Congo is illustrative in many ways of how conflicts in the Great Lakes region can spread to the Central African Republic.

This brief analysis suffices to show that the Central African Republic is affected by the crisis in the Great Lakes region. Co-opted in 2004, the Central African Republic will, like two other countries in the region — Angola and the Congo — become a full member of the process, with the same decision-making power as the others.

The National Preparatory Committee of the Central African Republic has taken a very active part in all the work of the Great Lakes Conference process. Twenty-eight projects inspired by or proposed by the Central African Republic were among the 63 adopted at the last Regional Preparatory Committee meeting, held in Mombasa.

The Central African Republic will host in Bangui, from 20 to 22 February 2006, the third Regional Inter-ministerial Committee meeting. This important meeting will focus on adopting projects and protocols considered by the regional preparatory committees. The preparations have begun with the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee under the chairmanship of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region has significant advantages for all countries concerned, with regard to the projects to be implemented at the end of this process. For this reason, the Central African Republic appeals for additional assistance for the United Nations Office for the Great

Lakes Region. We would also like to thank the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region for its major ongoing contribution to the Conference process, with the support of the United Nations and the African Union.

The President: I would like to remind delegations, in the interest of time, to try their best possible to stick to the five-minute time limit.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): Mr. President, I wish to thank you for the invitation extended to Nigeria to participate in this open debate under the Tanzanian presidency. We consider this initiative by your country as a reaffirmation of the positive role in activities on the African continent. We warmly congratulate your country on its initiative.

Let me also pay tribute to the United Kingdom presidency of the Council last month.

I wish to express my delegation's appreciation to the Security Council for its continuing exertion on the issue of preventing and resolving conflicts in Africa. Since the year 2000 this interest has continued to manifest itself in a number of resolutions, of which resolution 1649 (2005) — adopted at the summit-level meeting of the Security Council, at the margin of the 2005 World Summit — is noteworthy. This open debate is, therefore, yet another indication of the Council's determination to find a lasting solution to the problems that have bedevilled the Great Lakes region.

There is no gainsaying the importance of peace, security and stability of the Great Lakes for the overall development of Africa, as well as for the achievement of noble goals encapsulated in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). I wish to recall, in this connection, the holding of the first International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in Dar-es-Salaam in November 2004, in which President Olusegun Obasanjo participated, both in his capacity as leader of Nigeria and as Chairman of the African Union (AU). The issues addressed at that summit — such as transnational crime and terrorism, disarmament and repatriation of armed groups, governance issues, including the rational management of resources and coordinated approaches towards humanitarian problems — constitute some of the challenges the countries in the Great Lakes region face in building trust and confidence among their peoples.

A second summit, which is being arranged in Nairobi later this year, would enable the leaders to adopt protocols and a programme of action that would impact favourably on the political, social and economic situation of countries in the region. The international community should lend its support to the holding of the summit and provide resources to ensure its success.

There are undoubtedly positive signs of a turn-around in the political fortunes of countries in the region, and that bodes well for the cause of peace and security therein. In particular, the approaching end to the transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the consolidation of peace in Burundi, and the indictment of the leadership of the Lord's Resistance Army, which has wreaked such havoc in parts of the region, should encourage more active support for the peace process. In the Democratic of Republic of the Congo, for example, the support of the international community for the electoral process and internal reforms should be unambiguous. It should be given expression through concrete assistance to the Congolese Government, for without such substantial assistance, the path that the Congolese Government is courageously treading will be bumpy. On the other hand, such assistance, when provided, will send a positive message of support for the political process. It will especially enable that Government confidently to address governance issues, including the strengthening of national institutions. Nigeria believes, however, that national and regional ownership should remain paramount in such efforts.

As regards the role of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we believe it should be able, under its current mandate, to deploy United Nations troops strategically, especially in the border areas, so as to prevent arms smuggling. That would also be a confidence-building measure. Meanwhile, I wish to join previous speakers in conveying to the Government of Guatemala our condolences and heartfelt sympathies for the deaths of eight members of its contingent.

The swearing-in on Friday, 26 August 2005 of Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza as the new President of Burundi rekindled hope for the future of the people of that country. The power-sharing agreement signed in

Pretoria, South Africa, in 2003 set the stage for the election that brought him to power. Burundi should be encouraged and assisted to deepen the process of constitutional reform and national integration and development. The cooperation of the international community with the regional and subregional organizations would strengthen the capacity of Burundi to follow through on its commitments under the new constitution.

The impending completion of the United Nations Operation in Burundi should not signal the end of the United Nations presence in Burundi. On the contrary, Nigeria views the next phase in that country's development — the post-conflict phase — as providing an opportunity to activate and implement a programme of reconstruction and development. We anticipate that the newly established Peacebuilding Commission will play a role in that regard. Nigeria has no doubt that the country's new leadership has the political will to sustain the current positive changes in the country.

Nigeria considers the activities of non-State actors to be a major threat to peace and security, especially in the Great Lakes region. As the Council recognized in resolution 1649 (2005), the combination of the proliferation of and traffic in arms, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, and the illicit trade in those resources by those groups have continued to fuel and exacerbate conflicts in the region. A firm and unambiguous stand by the international community is needed to rein in those groups and to hold them and their collaborators, within and outside the region, accountable for their misdeeds, including the violation of international humanitarian law. Neighbouring countries should not allow the use of their territories as launching pads for attacks by those groups.

It is Nigeria's expectation that there will emerge from this debate a clear message signaling the resolve of the Security Council to support regional and subregional initiatives targeted at promoting peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. Such support should encompass the identification of a new and effective mechanism of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, whose Peace and Security Council is also actively seized with those issues within the context of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter.

Secondly, the capacities of the countries in the region to meet the various challenges before them should be enhanced through a substantial infusion of assistance from donor countries and international financial institutions.

Thirdly, democracy, good governance, the rule of law and the protection of human rights should remain important principles in the pursuit of initiatives on peace and security in the region. National and regional institutions should be nurtured and, where they are weak, strengthened so as to ensure that those principles are entrenched.

Finally, the humanitarian problems created in the wake of the conflicts and reflected in the high number of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees in the region should be addressed in a global and comprehensive manner. That should be done through the coordination of assistance among providers, including civil society groups. The focus of those efforts should continue to be the rehabilitation of victims and their integration into the mainstream of national life once conflicts are over.

The President: I call on the representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): It is a pleasure to participate in this debate, especially at this propitious time on Friday evening.

The Pakistan delegation welcomes your presence in New York, Madam, to preside over this important meeting. We congratulate Ambassador Mahiga and the Tanzanian delegation on their skilful guidance of the Council's work this month and on their initiative in holding this debate. Let me also express our appreciation to Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry for the United Kingdom's successful presidency last month and wish Tanzania's successor, Ambassador John Bolton of the United States, an equally successful presidency next month.

The relevance of this debate has been illustrated by the recent casualties suffered by Guatemala's United Nations peacekeepers in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We offer Guatemala our deep condolences. Yet, that incident cannot mask the considerable progress that has been made towards peace and development in the Great Lakes region, including the completion of the peace process leading to the democratically elected Government in Burundi and the encouraging democratic transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Pakistan has

contributed and is contributing to the international effort in both countries through our peacekeeping contingents in the United Nations Operation in Burundi and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

Earlier speakers, including African ministers from the region, offered a clear perspective and important proposals that deserve the Council's close consideration. Let me, on behalf of Pakistan, mention five points which appear essential to building peace and security and advancing development in that region.

First, it is important to consolidate the gains made so far. That requires the sustained engagement of the United Nations and the continued cooperation of the countries of the region. This debate has affirmed that the regional States and the United Nations are committed to that course. In that context, the vital importance of promoting good-neighbourly relations based on mutual respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all States of the region cannot be overemphasized.

Your country, Madam, has played a leading role in promoting such regional relations, especially at the first International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, held in Dar es-Salaam in November 2004, and in the implementation of the Dar es-Salaam Declaration and preparations for a second summit. An effective regional mechanism for the peaceful settlement and resolution of disputes could constitute an important component in fostering a peaceful and cooperative neighbourhood.

Secondly, the urgent challenges need to be frontally addressed. Foremost among those challenges is the effective and complete disarmament and demobilization of armed groups and militias. They pose a pervasive threat to peace and can sabotage the achievements of the peace processes.

The tragic incident of 25 January, in which eight Guatemalan peacekeepers were killed, and the incident last February, in which nine Bangladeshi peacekeepers were ambushed by outlawed militias in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, indicate the need to fully evaluate the strategies that must be employed to promote sustainable security in that and other parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. We urge the Secretary-General to investigate the circumstances of those incidents and identify any possible shortcomings in the conception of the mandate vis-à-vis force generation and deployment, intelligence gathering, forced disarmament and other kinds of robust action. We hope that after such an investigation, the Secretary-General will be able to recommend steps to address such shortcomings. MONUC has been provided with a robust mandate, but robust operations must be undertaken with adequate strength and resources. Otherwise, the lives of peacekeepers are in danger. Is MONUC adequately staffed, equipped and resourced to carry out that mandate while operating in what are called particularly hazardous conditions?

Thirdly, the United Nations should support the endeavour of the African States to assume ownership for securing solutions to African problems. Security Council resolutions 1625 (2005) and 1631 (2005) represent steps in the Organization's evolving relationship with the African Union, as will the resolution that will be adopted following this debate. The role of the United Nations remains central in the maintenance of international peace and security, but it should actively support capacity-building in the African Union in various fields and should secure the latter's services where possible to complement the work of the Organization.

Fourthly, sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region cannot be realized without a sustained and sufficient international commitment to support the region's economic and social development. In that regard, we hope that the Peacebuilding Commission will be a valuable mechanism to marshal the necessary resources and cooperation to consolidate peace and prevent the recurrence of conflict in the Great Lakes region. We highly appreciate the role that Tanzania and Ambassador Mahiga played in the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Fifthly, sustainable peace and successful economic growth in the region cannot be achieved without addressing the complex root causes of the threats to security. Foremost among them is the illegal exploitation of the region's natural resources. That must be addressed from both the supply and the demand sides. We must follow up and not forget the Kassebi report. Those involved in illegal exploitation of natural resources, and the financiers and profiteers of that illegal trade, must be equally held accountable.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil): I wish to start by congratulating you, Madame President, and your delegation, on behalf of Brazil for convening this open debate on the important subject of the Great Lakes region, which is now a major stage for initiatives not only in the field of peace and security but also on issues inextricably linked to that field, such as democracy, human rights and development.

With regard to the positive side of the question, I should mention the completion in 2008 of the Peer Review Mechanism of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in Rwanda, the successful conduct of the constitutional referendum in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the end of conflict and the holding of fair and transparent elections in Burundi, the beginning of the return of refugees who had been in Tanzania for decades, and the likelihood of some economic recovery in the subregion. It is also worth mentioning the establishment of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and its first Summit in 2004, which set the ground for much-needed dialogue and mutual understanding.

However, the overall situation in the region remains very complex. Along with the encouraging aspects I just highlighted, there continues to be an outrageous number of casualties caused by war-related diseases, reports of gross violations of human rights, including acts of sexual violence against women, and, at the political arena, the entanglement of warlords with the economic interests of local and foreign groups.

The Security Council and the international community as a whole have been providing crucial support for peacekeeping missions and humanitarian efforts in the region. Likewise, the African Union, regional organizations and African leaders have been committed to the promotion of peace and stability in an area often presented as the heart of Africa. But the challenges continue to be tremendous.

Peacekeeping efforts in the region have exacted a very heavy toll. The incidents that took place this month, victimizing Guatemalan troops of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) — eight of them lethally — are a stark reminder of the sacrifices being made by peacekeepers and by troop-contributing countries in the quest to promote peace. They also point out the disproportionate burden borne by developing countries in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

It is necessary to continue to support strategies for peace and development in the Great Lakes region. In that connection, an important principle to be observed is that of African ownership in solving pending crises and problems in that region. This goes beyond entrusting regional and subregional African security mechanisms with responsibility over military operations and providing financial backing and capacity-building support, as it must also allow for the increased involvement of African collective and national structures in the decision-making processes regarding the solution of the crises.

The United Nations structure itself, in particular the composition of the Security Council, shows the need for such adjustments, including an increased African membership. Without a balanced and fair composition at the decision-making level, there is little hope of correcting the practices that have led to the current almost paradoxical situation. Despite the fact that African issues occupy the greater part of the agenda of the Security Council, it is not uncommon to see reports in the press about the indifference of the international community to the situation in that continent.

Open meetings such as this one should also become common practice before the adoption of major decisions, as a means to promote greater involvement of the United Nations membership and to enhance not only transparency, but also the quality of the decisions reached by the Council.

It is in this spirit that my delegation expresses hope for the new Peacebuilding Commission. With increased participation and a multidisciplinary focus by design, the Commission should be able to devise new strategies to avoid the recurrence of conflict, ensure the consolidation of peace and promote efforts leading to sustainable development.

In keeping with the regional approach, the Peacebuilding Commission could consider taking on the challenge of addressing the complex situation of the Great Lakes region, in close cooperation with the International Conference. The Conference seems to have made progress in proposing legal frameworks and confidence-building measures. Its technical committees are working on the major issues relating to the

promotion of peace, security and development in the whole region, such as the illegal exploitation of natural resources, food safety and border controls.

Finally, my delegation believes that ownership, coordination and legitimacy are all essential elements already identified at the International Conference and that the process must be fully supported.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cameroon.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam, upon your presidency of the Security Council, which you and your country are successfully accomplishing during the month of January and for having thus quickly taken an interest in, inquiry and in response to the Great Lakes region.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for the quality, density and exhaustive nature of his report.

Mr. President, I am the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. Just now, for presentation with the Singapore and Indonesia, with which we are familiar. We thank him for having dealt with substantially but also in a very useful and practical way to support the bodies of the region in preparing for and following up the first International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We congratulate and thank him for his support for the emergence of a climate of confidence among States of the region, a climate propitious for holding the Second Summit.

I should strongly underline the events of 25 January on a detachment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which caused the death of eight soldiers of the Bangladeshi contingent. I sincerely wish to express condolences to Guatemala in this painful hour.

The Great Lakes region is strongly committed to seeking peace. All citizens, unless efforts are still needed to consolidate the peace and stability that are the prerequisites for sustainable economic and social development. The countries of the region, supported by the international community, must redouble their efforts to achieve the future we desire. My delegation welcomes the fact that the Dar es Salaam agreement of principle will set the road map to be followed. Now a process has been launched that allows us to move towards this objective.

The challenges to be overcome in all areas involve peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and regional integration, as well as humanitarian and social issues. The interrelationship among these challenges and the interdependence of the countries of the Great Lakes region call for an integrated approach and for enhanced cooperation on various levels. A framework is in place. It must be strengthened, and we must encourage the organizations within that framework.

The regional dynamic of peace, integration and economic development depends on the viability of the States in the region. My delegation would like to welcome the generally positive political developments taking place in these countries.

In Burundi, we welcome all the efforts carried out to achieve successful transition in line with the spirit of Arusha and we encourage the new authorities to follow the process of reconstruction and to do so through dialogue. The international community, through the Forum of partners of Burundi, must continue to support them in their efforts. There is no doubt whatsoever that the Senior Peacebuilding Commission will also contribute with the means at its disposal.

The crisis in peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will, we are sure, allow a qualitative shift towards the definitive stabilization of the Great Lakes region. The recent developments, with the adoption of the referendum on the constitution and the great preparations for the general elections on 30 June, are cause for real optimism.

Here I want to point out the symbolic value of the date chosen for the elections. The choice of June is the day on which the Congolese people, as one man and led by Patrice Emery Lumumba, made the solemn promise to Africa and to the whole world to build a Congo that was free, united and prosperous. Our wish is that on the day that speech of 30 June will resonate with the same force and energy in the hearts and minds of all Congolese people.

Cameroon strongly favours a political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that is consensual, transparent and inclusive. However, there

are several pitfalls in the road ahead. There is still the matter of armed groups. To end that problem the countries of the region must, individually and collectively, take resolute and concerted action. The disbanding of armed groups and the disarmament, repatriation and reintegration of former combatants, including foreign combatants, is the other important element of those needed efforts.

My country also welcomes in that connection the fact that the Security Council adopted resolution 1649 (2005), which strengthens the action being taken against those armed groups, who continue to threaten civilians, especially women and children. They also threaten the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and stability in the region. Furthermore, the countries of the region and the international community must increase their efforts in the fight against the illegal exploitation of and illicit trade in natural resources and the proliferation of and trafficking in weapons that fuel the conflicts.

Finally — and this is our heartfelt conviction — there can be no lasting peace in that region if women and children continue to be marginalized and exploited and subjected to violence of all forms, including sexual violence. In that regard we welcome the quality of the discussions in the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme on 25 January.

It can never be said often enough that the success of the upcoming International Conference on Peace, Security, Stability and Development of the Great Lakes Region will open new horizons for peace and development. The international community must support those countries in their efforts for the success of that meeting. It should also support their efforts to achieve peace and development.

Cameroon, for its part, is contributing to those efforts in many ways. The Council will recall that in 1996, when it was holding the presidency of the pan-African organization, President Paul Biya formally proposed to the United Nations the idea of an international conference on the Great Lakes. We welcome the fact that that idea is now a reality.

By contributing a military observer and civilian police personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi, Cameroon is working towards peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. As Mr. Ibrahima Fall said earlier today, the region lies at the heart of the geopolitical space of Central Africa, Southern Africa and East Africa.

I conclude by paying tribute to the memory of all peacekeepers who have lost their lives on the field of honour as they strove to build a world of peace and progress.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by congratulating the United Republic of Tanzania on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. It is a privilege to see its Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Her Excellency the Honourable Asha-Rose Migiro, presiding over today's meeting.

I wish also to express our gratitude for today's numerous statements of solidarity with my country in connection with the tragic deaths of eight members of the Guatemalan contingent of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). The blood spilled by my compatriots serves as a confirmation of my country's commitment to the regional stability and peace that is so sorely needed by our brethren on the African continent.

My country has followed very closely the armed chaos endured by the peoples of the Great Lakes region over the course of nearly four decades of internal conflict. We understand and are convinced of the need for efforts to ensure that the peoples of the region can attain development. That requires an environment of peace, security and political stability.

I wish to focus on two countries of the region, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Guatemalan military observers and special forces are stationed. In 2006, the Economic and Social Council added a new dimension to its work with the establishment of Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on African countries emerging from conflict. During its presidency of the Economic and Social Council in 2003, Guatemala proposed the establishment of such a group for Burundi. The Ad Hoc Advisory Groups have proved to be a useful tool for bringing together development partners, including within the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the broader donor community, with a view to jointly

considering the needs of the countries in question. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Burundi adopted a broad approach to issues related to the transition and recovery processes in that country, which averted a renewal of conflict.

With the imminent operationalization of the Peacebuilding Commission, we urge the Commission's Organizational Committee to consider countries such as Burundi and hope that such consideration will be possible through the anticipated machinery of Commission meetings focusing on specific countries.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo we have seen slow but positive progress. My country joins the Secretary-General and the membership of the General Assembly in congratulating the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the successful constitutional referendum held on 18 and 19 December 2005, and we hope that free, impartial, transparent and democratic elections will similarly be held by 30 June 2006, when the transitional period ends.

At the same time, Guatemala notes with concern that militias and foreign armed groups continue hostilities in the region. These are exemplified by the recent attacks against Guatemalan troops by the rebel Lord's Resistance Army. We need speedily to learn the details of how that tragic incident occurred. In that regard, my delegation echoes the words of the representative of Pakistan.

We encourage the countries of the region to enforce the arms embargo on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to impose the strictest possible controls on illegal cross-border transfers of natural resources and weapons and on cross-border movements of fighters.

Guatemala has benefited directly from a United Nations peacebuilding mission, which is why we understand the enormous importance of those who work in the Organization's peace operations. Without the shadow of a doubt, this is a basic activity and fundamental objective of the United Nations, the sole international body with the credibility and legitimacy and with the right tools to carry out these difficult but necessary tasks. That is why, despite the recent tragic deaths, my Government remains fully prepared to continue to support United Nations peace operations. I reiterate my country's commitment to the Organization's peacekeeping operations and my delegation's readiness to continue to work to improve the peacekeeping system. We are convinced that every effort in that regard will further the high founding ideals of the United Nations and will help it to carry out one of its essential Charter functions.

Let me conclude by paying tribute to the memory of all those who have lost their lives in the service of understanding and peacebuilding under the United Nations flag.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Permit me at the outset to express my Government's sincere condolences to the representative of Guatemala, to his Government and to the bereaved families of the eight Guatemalan peacekeepers who were recently killed in the line of duty as they worked on behalf of the United Nations.

Norway supports the encouraging developments in several countries of the Great Lakes region, including the positive election process in Burundi and the ongoing transition process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Norway acknowledges the importance of continued active United Nations engagement and of the African commitment to peacekeeping and mediation in the Great Lakes region. Norway strongly supports regional initiatives to enhance stability in the Great Lakes region, including the forthcoming second Great Lakes Summit and the adoption of the proposed Security, Stability and Development Pact, as well as the Tripartite Plus One Commission.

The recent history of the Great Lakes region has shown very clearly that national borders are porous and that loyalties transcend State frontiers. As a consequence, the security of any one country cannot be seen in isolation; it is part of the larger regional picture. Internal war or conflict in one country produces a spillover effect in other countries in the region. That is particularly visible in terms of the movement of refugees, weapons and rebel groups.

The recent killing of eight peacekeepers of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) clearly illustrates that regional security dimension. A positive outcome of the transitional process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is essential for the stability of the entire region. The Government of Norway is therefore very

concerned about the negative impact of the LRA's activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The conflict between the Government of Uganda and the LRA not only has grave consequences for the Ugandan civilians living in camps in appalling conditions; it also affects the security of civilians in the whole region. In addition, the conflict affects the security and operational space of United Nations peacekeeping missions: MONUC and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has taken an important step by issuing its first arrest warrants for five Lord's Resistance Army commanders. Norway will continue to support the ICC in its efforts to bring an end to impunity for grave human rights violators.

The Government of Norway acknowledges the fact that the responsibility to protect all Ugandan citizens lies with the Government of Uganda. However, it is also Norway's view that the LRA represents a threat to regional peace and security. Norway therefore urges the Security Council to address, at the earliest possible date, the grave impact of the actions of the LRA.

The President: It is my understanding that the Council is ready to vote on the draft resolution (S/2006/51) before it. If I hear no objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Argentina, China, the Republic of the Congo, Denmark, France, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Qatar, Russian Federation, Slovakia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America

The President: There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1653 (2006).

The hour is late, but it would be remiss on my part and on the part of the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania if we were to conclude this fruitful discussion without expressing our gratitude to the Security Council for having agreed to hold this open debate.

I thank all the members of the Security Council for the spirit of cooperation with which they have worked with my delegation to get this resolution adopted and for having adopted it as a presidential text. I pay tribute to all other members who, in one way or another, made a valuable contribution to the elements contained in the resolution.

The resolution that the Council has just adopted is a demonstration of our renewed commitment to the realization of durable peace and security for the sustainable development of our region. We look forward to its earnest implementation.

We are indebted to the Ministers and to all those who have travelled from various capitals to participate in the deliberations we have held.

Finally, I thank very warmly members of the Secretariat for their hard work and for the organizational support they have provided to make this meeting a success.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 7.25 p.m.